"The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*." – Leon Trotsky

AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA

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AMERICAN IMPERIALIST RAMPAGE

How To Defend Ourselves

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Inside: Iran, Cuba, Maduro, Water Crisis, Workplace Femicide, Philippines, Debates on the Left

Editorial Note

US Rampage 2026 — How to Defend Ourselves

We are only in the third month, but this year has already outdone even 2025 when it comes to American imperialist reaction. Trump bombed Nigeria over the Christmas holidays; then began the new year by bombing Venezuela and kidnapping its president; followed by imposing a starvation blockade of Cuba and threatening a number of other Latin American countries—as well as Greenland—with invasion. Now the US and Israel have unleashed another war on Iran, assassinating the country's Supreme Leader. This threatens to engulf the whole region in a protracted war and plunge the global economy into recession. In the US itself, imperialist marauding abroad is reflected domestically in growing reaction and capitalist decay—ICE's deadly anti-immigrant rampage, cop terror against black people, union-busting.

It's clear enough that major world changes are happening, but it's hard to make sense of them and get oriented amid the relentless pounding of events. Where are we headed, what are the driving forces, and what are revolutionaries to do about any of it? To form a coherent and realistic picture of the turning point we are in, we must start from the top. The main factor shaping world events is US imperialism's attempt to overcome the increasing gap between its dominant global role and declining economic power. Events this year paint a stark picture of how this is being done. On the one hand, we have Trump's aggressive foreign policy. Although incoherent and self-contradictory in many ways, the overarching unity and force of this policy is precisely that it expresses American imperialism's readiness to drag the whole world down into a spiral of chaos and death to stay on top. On the other hand, the countries whose growing economic power threatens the US—first of all China—have ***no*** coherent policy to counter it. As Trump shreds the liberal world order established by US hegemony, the main response of Communist Party of China (CPC) leaders and other heads of BRICS+ countries is to drone on about the need to maintain that order.

What must revolutionaries do in this situation? In the face of American imperialist reaction, ***we need to fight***. But we can only fight effectively if we face reality squarely. Many revolutionaries internationally see a rising tide on the left matching the growth of right-wing reaction. Unfortunately, this view is totally at odds with reality. Most importantly, it completely ignores the dominant moods in the working class—which in the West and Japan is largely moving to the right, not the left; and in the Global South has not yet shown signs of increased militancy, playing no major role in the mass protests of the past year.

That is not to downplay the great revolutionary ***potential***, particularly among the industrial proletariat of the Global South. Forging a class-struggle pole to defend ourselves against US empire is the way to unify the workers movement and shift the balance of forces in favour of the working class and oppressed. But to play our part in this task, revolutionaries must wake up, bracing ourselves and our class for "a ***reactionary period*** of capitalist offensive, in which the living conditions of working people will be attacked on a scale not seen in decades". As we explained in the article motivating this sober outlook, this in no way means resigning ourselves to a one-sided battle or standing aside passively:

> "Quite the contrary. It calls for steeled resolve, defensive actions and serious preparation. The stronger the resistance, the quicker the working class can go on the offensive. But to do this effectively, advanced workers and the socialist movement need a correct understanding of the rhythm and direction of events."
>
> —"The World at a Turning Point",
> *Spartacist* Supplement, 13 November 2025
> iclfi.org/spartacist/en/2025-world

We also need to take a hard look at the weak state of the left, debating and clarifying how we got here and the lessons that must be drawn to re-orient and go forward. That is what the articles in this issue of *AmaBolsheviki Amnyama* seek to do. Throughout, they confront the main obstacles holding back the revolutionary left and cut through organisational and other counterproductive divisions in order to help clarify and re-orient. These articles cover the major conflicts in the world today, including defence of Iran (page 3) and Cuba (page 5). They also address the need for united-front defence of the left against state repression—from the cases of Xolani Khoza (page 17) and Julius Malema (page 4) in South Africa, to Booker Omole in Kenya and Fred M'membe in Zambia (page 16). Other topics of note include the fight against femicide at the workplace, where we put forward an approach which seeks to strengthen working-class unity as opposed to reliance on the bosses and their state (see page 6). The article from our Philippines comrades (page 8) should be of particular interest to readers here because it draws lessons from the defeat of the recent anti-corruption protests there, putting forward a class-struggle, anti-imperialist path for the movement.

* * *

The war on **Iran** casts a glaring spotlight on the traps that keep the left from fighting for a revolutionary working-class pole against US imperialism. On the one hand are those that take a neutral position in this war. Repudiating the need to ***take a side*** with Iran against the US and Israel, they resort to pious pacifism ("No to war!", or pseudo-radical variants like "No war but the class war!"). Their main argument is to point to the bloody repression of the Iranian regime against women, leftists and popular protests, and to proclaim that this must be done away with. It is absolutely true that the bloody mullahs must be overthrown; however, to use that as a justification for refusing to defend Iran in the current war is the worst capitulation to imperialism and Zionism. It willfully ignores that what's decisive is ***what force*** overthrows the regime. Standing by and allowing this to be done on American terms means aiding and abetting the most reactionary outcome—not only for the masses of Iran and the region, but for the whole world. In contrast, defending Iran against the US and Israel is the ***only way*** to

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Front page (clockwise from top): Oil depot hit by US-Israeli airstrikes, March 7 in Tehran; Gaza City, October 2025; Julius Malema in East London Magistrate's Court; US federal agents haul Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores to court, January 5 in New York City.
Credits: Sasan/AFP, Ali Jadallah/Anadolu, EFF, Star Max/GC Images

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Email: spartacist_sa@yahoo.com
WhatsApp: 079 171 5793
AmaBolsheviki Amnyama
@AmaBolsheviki
@amabolshevikiamnyama
iclfi.org
Spartacist, P.O. Box 61574, Marshalltown, Johannesburg 2107 • Voicemail: 088-130-1035

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Stop US-Israel Rampage
Defend Iran!

The following statement was issued as a supplement to Spartacist *on 28 February.*

The U.S. and Israel have created a trail of utter devastation. Netanyahu has mercilessly butchered the Palestinian people; Trump has attacked and threatened one country after another. Now they are jointly attacking Iran. ***This madness must be stopped! Iran must be defended!***

If the U.S. and Israel succeed in overthrowing the Iranian regime, it will not bring liberation to the Iranian people. They will become slaves of Zionism and imperialism, and the U.S. and Israel will have a free hand to terrorize the region.

The bombs being dropped all over Iran do not distinguish between the regime and the people. Right now, ***to stand with the people of Iran means defending the country against foreign aggression.*** The Iranian people will settle their accounts with the bloody mullahs on their own terms.

If the U.S. and Israel suffer major military blows, or if the international working class comes out in force against this aggression, it would put a wrench in the current offensive and finally stop Trump's rampage. The working class, particularly in the U.S., has an interest in this as Republicans and Democrats drag the country and the entire world down into a spiral of death and misery. For its own interests it must act and ***stop the U.S. war machine!*** ■

Iran War

Don't Underestimate US Imperialism

The following statement, authored by G. Perrault, was issued as a supplement to Spartacist *on 16 March.*

From the mainstream media to YouTubers and the revolutionary left, there is growing unanimity that the U.S.-Israeli offensive against Iran will end in defeat. As communists, we strive for such an outcome and firmly stand in defense of Iran against the ongoing imperialist attack. However, it is precisely because we have a militant stance in this conflict that ***we must warn against the danger of complacency.***

All the way back to October 2023, we have been told by countless analysts that Israel has no off-ramp, that it will run out of ammunition, that it will collapse from within. But none of this has happened. Israel and the U.S. have dictated the tempo of events. They have launched increasingly aggressive offensives and paused them when convenient. The Axis of Resistance has fought back, but it has constantly been on the back foot, leading to multiple setbacks and a weakening position.

While the latest round of clashes is taking place at a higher level of intensity, nothing so far shows a fundamental change in the strategic orientation of the respective parties. Why should we have any confidence that this time the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) will fight on until it inflicts a major strategic defeat on the U.S. and Israel?

We cannot once again rely on the Axis of Resistance or on the promise of future political discontent in the West. The left and anti-imperialist forces must put their own strategy forward, one that opposes the current onslaught but also provides a real path to throwing the U.S. out of West Asia.

ZUMA Press

March 13, Tehran: Iranians defiantly join Al-Quds Day rally in support of Palestinian liberation as USA and Israel unleash deadly airstrikes.

A New Paradigm

The first thing to understand is that the world we live in today is not that of the early 2000s. In 2003 Bush and Blair went to great lengths to diplomatically justify their attack against Iraq. Today, Trump and Netanyahu couldn't care less. It is not so much the personalities of the leaders that have changed. Rather, it is the political era that is now fundamentally different.

After decades of relative stability, the world is now entering a dangerous downward spiral in which the U.S. is acting with ever-growing aggression and irrationality to maintain its hegemony. On a regional scale, this is the course Israel has followed since October 7, launching increasingly rash attacks on countries throughout the region.

To get a sense of what this new era will look like, we must

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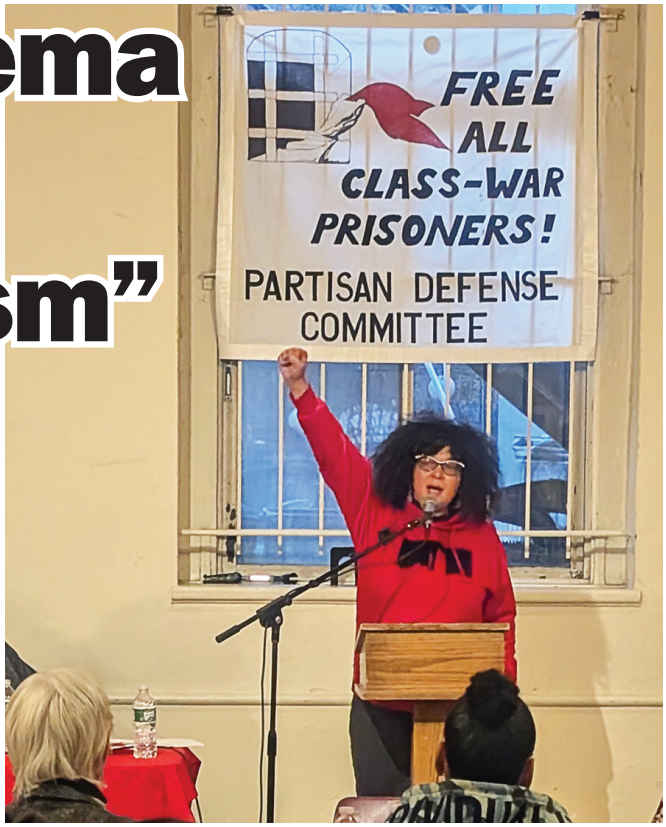
“Defend Malema to Fight US Imperialism”

The following article is reprinted from Black History & the Class Struggle *No. 27, a publication of our comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. It is an edited speech by comrade Erica of the Spartacist League at the Partisan Defense Committee’s January 24 Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners in New York City.*

Amandla! Awethu! Yesterday the South African government postponed the sentencing of EFF leader Julius Malema to April 15. This means the fight continues. We join in solidarity with our comrades in Spartacist/South Africa and fighters in the EFF in building support to defend Malema, to defend ourselves here in the belly of the beast too. The “Government of National Unity” (GNU) coalition—the ANC and the openly pro-imperialist and white-dominated Democratic Alliance—is going after Malema in order to prevent any resistance to the strangulation of the black masses. The GNU enforces this on behalf of Trump and the Randlords. Trump put a target on Malema’s back last year in that infamous White House visit with imperialist puppet Cyril Ramaphosa.

Why Malema and the EFF? The imperialists want to prevent the masses attracted to the EFF from trying to fight for liberation from the racist Randlords and the neo-apartheid ANC government, which is responsible for a trail of broken promises and misery.

The black South African masses are hated by the U.S. ruling class because they want land, good jobs, adequate housing, basic services like electricity and control of the mines and other imperialist-owned property. That’s what is behind Trump’s instruction to Ramaphosa to get rid of Julius Malema: the imperialists want to eliminate any movement that even gestures toward fighting for the land and resources that rightly belong to the black people of South Africa. Hands off Malema and the EFF!



PDC

New York Holiday Appeal, January 24: Comrade Erica provides update on fight to defend Malema, urging all socialists to take up fight.

The end of apartheid in 1994 was supposed to mean real liberation, but the reality is massive unemployment, miserable living conditions and rampant exploitation of black and Coloured workers. This is not so dissimilar to the aspirations for black liberation here. We were promised 40 acres and freedom following the Civil War, but instead got over a century and a half of racist capitalist oppression, segregation and massive state repression—with cops gunning down black and brown people with impunity.

Many black people in the U.S. feel a connection with black South Africans. There is a natural alliance. They both, along with the entire U.S. working class, share a common enemy in U.S. imperialism. The imperialists are trying to do to Malema in South Africa what they’ve done to militant black political leaders here, like Mumia Abu-Jamal: lock them away or worse.

Trump’s crushing and starvation of the black South African masses goes hand in hand with his attacks on immigrants and his assault on workers here, too. And the threat to this country’s black population is undeniable.

But both of the struggles, the struggle for the national liberation of black South Africans and the struggle for black liberation here, have something else in common. Both have been betrayed by leaders of the union movement and leftists who seek alliances with the capitalist rulers and their politicians. Here that expresses itself by trying to keep the struggle for black liberation confined to what is acceptable to the liberals and the Democratic Party. This has resulted in turning off many workers who have seen their livelihoods suffer at the hands of the Democrats and have turned to Trump. This has deepened divisions in the working class, especially along racial lines.

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Which Way Forward for the Black Struggle
LIBERALISM DESTROYED THE BLACK STRUGGLE
HOW TO REBUILD IT
blackstruggle.org/27
Inside: DEI Purge, Cop Brutality, Labor, Mumia, Assata, L.A., South Africa

blackstruggle.org

Mexico: Break the Blockade!

Double the Oil Shipments to Cuba!

Translated from a 31 January supplement to El Antiimperialista*, the newspaper of our Mexican comrades, the Grupo Espartaquista de México.*

Last Thursday, Trump announced additional tariffs on every country that sends oil to Cuba, while deploying an aircraft carrier and ships to the north of the island and boasting that Cuba "will not be able to survive." The triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the workers' state that emerged from it, just miles from the U.S., have always been an affront to the imperialists, and Trump is determined to end it now. The threat of tariffs is aimed especially at Mexico which, after the U.S. invasion of Venezuela, became essentially the sole supplier of crude oil to Cuba. If this attack goes unopposed, demoralization will spread among the Latin American working masses—who have historically seen Cuba as a beacon of anti-imperialist struggle—and Trump will advance his goal of brutally subjugating the entire region. Resistance is necessary. ***Down with the blockade! Yankees out of Cuba and all of Latin America!***

[Mexican President Claudia] Sheinbaum has warned that Trump's measures could unleash a humanitarian crisis on the island, "directly affecting hospitals, food, and other basic services for the Cuban people." This is true! Mexico should challenge the blockade and urgently send even more oil to Cuba. However, the Mexican government has taken the far from "sovereign" decision to suspend shipments and seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict, trying to appease the imperialists and the Mexican elite. Cuba has no time to waste on futile maneuvers. Sheinbaum's decision represents a betrayal and a death sentence for the Cuban people.

Many think that the president is doing what she can under the present circumstances, and that she is putting the interests of Mexico first. By now it should be clear that Trump is not interested in diplomacy and negotiation, but in complete submission. It is not a capitulation to retreat and live another day to fight, but that is not what is happening here. In reality, the Mexican government has ended up giving in to everything Trump has wanted, which can only bring more subjugation. Just look at what is happening in Venezuela! The country is not in a position of total defenselessness. Mexico can use the deep integration of the U.S. and Mexican economies to its advantage; for example, by halting the supply chains of U.S. industries or confiscating imperialist assets held here if the threats continue. But to do so, it is necessary to mobilize workers against extortion and not bow to imperialist diktats.

Even though Trump has stated several times that after Venezuela, the next on the list are Cuba, Colombia, and Mexico, Sheinbaum has been trying to sell us the idea that a military attack on our country is impossible. This is a deadly illusion. The defense of Cuba is not a matter of abstract solidarity, but vital to our own defense. The same force that is suffocating Cuba is economically strangling Mexico, causing thousands of layoffs in the *maquiladoras* and the auto industry, ruining entire communities. The unions will have more strength to defend themselves against these attacks the more that the country stands up to the imperialists. But the obstacle to mobilizing the powerful muscle of the Mexican proletariat is the current union leaderships, which easily spout rhetoric about national sovereignty and support for Cuba, but share Sheinbaum's strategy of "defending" the country and have not lifted a finger. The unions must take up the defense of Cuba as their own; in particular, the oil workers' union must ensure oil shipments. Today, more than ever, it is necessary to fight. ***For a united anti-imperialist front in defense of Cuba and Mexico!*** ■

These polarizations help keep working people divided against themselves as Trump launches attacks on immigrants and the unions. Now that the liberal mask has been torn off, the true face of racist U.S. imperialism again reveals itself, from the bombing of Venezuela and kidnapping of Maduro to the genocide in Palestine and attacks on Iran. U.S. imperialism is trying to force the world to line up behind its ambitions to maintain its world dominance. As the Mamdani administration works hand in hand with the healthcare bosses to freeze out striking nurses here in NYC and the Trump administration sics ICE on protesters and immigrants alike, united-front class-struggle defense is posed now more than ever.

All of these fights that you will hear about today—the fight to free political prisoners, to defend Malema, to release Maduro, to rebuild the movement against racist cop terror, to defend immigrants against ICE, to defend union workers on strike—show that the only way out of this mess is to bridge the divisions in the working class by appealing to the need for all those under attack to take a united stand against the common U.S. imperialist enemy. We have a lot of groups here. Talk to us after about how we can join forces. ■

Watch the full video on the
WORKERS VANGUARD
YouTube Channel:
youtube.com/watch?v=Yyfx50qqBxI

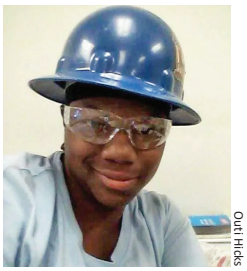
Amber Czech

Portraits by Cindy

2005 - 2025

Working Men: Keep Our Sisters Safe!

Outi Hicks



Outi Hicks

1984 - 2017

A skilled union woman worker submitted this letter to our American comrades on 17 December. We reprint it from their newspaper, Workers Vanguard*, No. 1188, December 2025.*

Amber Czech, a 20-year-old welder, was murdered with a sledgehammer while working at a Minnesota factory on November 11. Her killer, a 40-year-old coworker, told police that he "didn't like her" and had been planning to murder her for some time. As far as I know, Amber was not a union member and didn't have the minimum safety protections of a union. This atrocity sparked discussions among union sisters about how under attack they feel at overwhelmingly male worksites. Amber's murder recalls the 2017 murder of Outi Hicks, a black woman union carpenter apprentice who was bludgeoned to death by a male coworker on the job.

Working men: We are counting on you to keep us safe. Women workers: The bosses are to blame for your unsafe conditions, and the government always protects the bosses. You must look to trustworthy class brothers and sisters for your protection. Let's organize to stand up for women! The most important thing is to organize all non-union workplaces and apprentices into fighting unions that defend all their members, including women, black people and other oppressed minorities.

Building trades union leaders have issued statements decrying Amber's murder and all attacks against women. But what solutions do they offer? NABTU [North America's Building Trades Unions] promotes its "RESPECT program" for "labor-management cooperation" to "address head-on toxic cultures." The SMART [International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers] union's Women's Committee says, "We call on employers, contractors, supervisors and every person on a job site to confront the culture that allowed this to happen." Instead of unionization drives and a union-centered fight for women, they offer man-shaming feminist schemes for women to seek protection by talking to the bosses.

These responses are typical of union bureaucrats who tell women workers to go to Human Resources (i.e., management) or joint management-union offices to report harassment. If women refuse to rat out a coworker, they are usually expected to just suffer in silence. Consistent with their pro-capitalist strategy, the bureaucrats look to the bosses, government and cops to protect women and, at the same time, claim it's divisive to talk about women's oppression. Both are wrong.

Fighting for women according to the bosses' rules is a losing game for all workers. We need to organize to protect women on the job from dangerous lunatics, stalkers and anti-woman bigots. If more women workers experienced men uniting to say, "Leave her alone" or "She's not into you, brother" or "If you have a problem with her, you will have a problem with us," women would stop believing that their only option is to report abusive workers to the abusive bosses or a government agency. At the same time, this would protect innocent men from employer provocations and false accusations.

Paradoxically, "Zero Tolerance" rules against workplace violence keep women less safe. They discourage good men from stepping up against abusive men and putting the fear of god in them to leave a woman alone. The "Zero Tolerance" company policies target pro-union militants and are racist against black men, who can be punished for merely displaying anger, let alone intimidating an anti-woman coward. ***The unions, not the bosses, should have full control over whether and how to discipline workers.***

With unemployment rising and fewer jobs available, there will be more divide-and-conquer hostility to women in a "man's job." Trump has warned employers who receive government contracts to purge women and black people or else, under the bigoted presumption they were hired without "merit" (see Executive Order 14173). The purpose of the "anti-DEI" [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion] purge is to weaken the entire working class.

We need to fight for jobs for all and a shorter workweek with no loss in pay. As long as unemployment is accepted and there is a scramble for a shrinking piece of the pie, many workingmen will see women coworkers as competitors. Mobilizing workers to fight for more for everyone will undermine craft prejudices that cause skilled tradesmen to see themselves as the "chosen few" and to be hostile to outsiders. While fighting against the bosses' macho speed-up schemes and demanding more job opportunities, the building trades unions should launch aggressive campaigns to recruit women and minority workers.

The way out of this dog-eat-dog world is for all workers in the building trades to put the interests of our class first. Organizing all the unorganized and defending women workers as equals on the job would strengthen the fighting capacity of the unions as a whole. That's the best way to honor Amber and Outi. ■

Relaunched

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A Class-Struggle, Anti-Imperialist Response to the Water Crisis

Defend Julius Malema,
For Water, Land & Jobs:
You Can't Fight Imperialist Austerity With Imperialist-Funded NGOs
Spartacist/South Africa
AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA

AmaBolsheviki Amnyama

November 1: Spartacist intervenes at Joburg water protest, warns against unity with pro-imperialist forces.

The following article was originally published as a 20 February supplement to AmaBolsheviki Amnyama.

From Makanda to Joburg, millions of taps are running dry. The people's rage is boiling, especially against useless, out-of-touch ANC elites like Gauteng premier Panyaza Lesufi, who thinks families with no running water at home must…check into a hotel!! What's urgently needed is a collective struggle, rallying workers and communities to stand as one and force the government to provide this basic necessity of life. ***Clean, running water for all!***

The basis for mass action is clearly there—pretty much everyone is gatvol with the government's cruel and bungling response to this crisis. But organised protests have been scattered and divided. One week the community in Westbury blocks roads, next week it's pickets in Midrand, and another week SAMWU members strike at Joburg Water—all with zero coordination. This makes it easy for the government to keep a lid on the anger, sending water tankers and/or police nyalas to quell each protest in isolation. It allows the elites to stoke divisions, keeping the oppressed pitted against one another in a scramble for limited resources, instead of uniting against their common enemy.

The Struggle Must Be Anti-Imperialist

To turn this around, our approach as activists needs to urgently change in some important ways. First and foremost, we must understand that the fight for water can only go forward if it is waged on a clear ***anti-imperialist*** basis.

The just hatred of ANC politicians like Lesufi, Joburg mayor Dada Morero and water minister Pemmy Majodina must be directed toward a struggle that targets ***both*** the corrupt incompetence at local government level ***and*** the neoliberal austerity of the GNU at national level. They are two sides of the same coin: Imperialist-dictated austerity strangles services and maintenance, which is seized on by corrupt local officials and criminal syndicates to loot and sabotage; then the neoliberals step in again after the system has totally collapsed, to blackmail us with privatisation. Unless we fight this vicious cycle as a whole, the water crisis will be "solved" in the same reactionary way as the Eskom crisis, on the backs of the oppressed.

But far from intervening to guide the struggle along anti-imperialist lines, the main trend of leftist intervention in the water crisis has been capitulation to openly pro-imperialist, neoliberal forces. For example, Abahlali base Freedom Park and SAFTU in Johannesburg did much of the ground work last year to unite water protesters behind the Joburg Crisis Alliance—a coalition dominated by groups like the Rivonia Circle, WaterCAN and OUTA. These are creatures of the Oppenheimers and imperialists, who see them as useful "grassroots" camouflage for advancing the parasitic interests of white monopoly capital. For instance, their speakers used the November 1st water protest to preach support for the GNU's Operation Vulindlela privatisation drive.

For leftists to help subordinate the water protests to JCA leadership is to play right into the white rulers' hands, paving the way to neoliberal disaster. A sharp break from this course is absolutely necessary to make any progress.

Turn to the Workers

Instead of alliances with pro-imperialist forces like JCA, to fight for a progressive resolution of the crisis we must build an alliance with the workers in water and sanitation and their unions. Many activists are skeptical about the possibility of such an alliance, and it's not hard to see why when you look at the attitude of the current leaderships of SAMWU and other unions in the industry. They have done nothing at all to mobilise the union's power behind the protests of the communities that are suffering, and their members are often the ones sent to shut off water connections in the townships and squatter camps.

As a result, many activists write off the unions, even refusing to support SAMWU strikes like the one at Joburg Water a few weeks ago over unpaid bonuses. This is defeatist and totally counterproductive. We must fight to overcome the division between workers and the community by showing how it runs against the basic interests of both groups. We must reach out to SAMWU members, pointing out that staying isolated from the protests only paves the way to privatisation, which will be disastrous for their own pay and working conditions.

In contrast, fighting together will put them in a stronger position to resist this and to press for the interests that they share with the masses in the communities:

- ***Stop the sabotage and looting.*** Workers at Joburg Water, Rand Water and other public entities have no interest in seeing them destroyed in order to fatten the wallets of the water tanker mafias. Working together with area committees of delegates accountable to their communities, they can put a stop to this mischief.
- ***Expand services.*** Rebuild the collapsing infrastructure and extend it to provide water and sanitation to the growing population of Gauteng.
- ***Expand the workforce.*** Recruit thousands of new workers to carry out this work, improve safety and work conditions.

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ZUMA Press

Sipa USA

Left: Student protest in Quezon City, October 17. Right: Protesters clash with riot police in Manila, September 21.

Philippines Anti-Corruption Movement
What the *Hell* Happened?
How to Go Forward?

We reprint below a 24 February supplement to Talibang Anakpawis*, publication of Spartakistang Grupo Pilipinas.*

Forty years after the EDSA Popular Uprising that overthrew the brutal, corrupt US-backed dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., the Philippines is at another crossroads. The late dictator's son President Bongbong Marcos, chief lackey of the imperialists, is prepared to stop the commemoration by the socialist left and workers movement from taking place at EDSA Shrine.

Despite applications for assembly permits by various groups, the police declared EDSA Shrine a no rally zone. In the days leading up to the anniversary, the government charged around 100 leftist leaders and anti-corruption protesters with sedition and deployed over 13,000 armed police in the National Capital Region to suppress demonstrations. We say: ***Drop the charges against Renato Reyes, Tiffany Brillante, Jacob Baluyot, Joaquin Buenaflor and all anti-corruption protesters!***

The EDSA40 coalition, composed of the left and workers movement, is determined to defy bans and march to EDSA Shrine. In contrast, the organizers of the rival Trillion Peso March Movement (TPMM) at EDSA People Power Monument have agreed to an attendance cap of 20,000 people for the government-approved assembly and announced a ban on calls for the resignation of Bongbong Marcos.

Until recently, the fate of Marcos was uncertain due to anti-corruption rallies, coup threats, even calls for a new EDSA-type uprising that shook the US neo-colony. These movements had the potential to polarize the situation and challenge the Marcos/Duterte oligarchy, whose power structure is rooted in privatization and denationalization policies imposed by the World Bank-IMF and the US after the defeat of the revolutionary upsurge following the 1986 EDSA Popular Uprising. However, with renewed US support, Marcos has stabilized his position and tightened his grip on power.

So what led to the failure of the anti-corruption struggle?

The surge in protests was primarily driven by university and senior high school students angered by increasing fees, budget cuts, and diminishing career opportunities due to Donald Trump's new policies toward neo-colonies like the Philippines. These student-led actions began to mobilize broader segments of the working class and the oppressed, as seen in the massive September 21 protests on the anniversary of the declaration of martial law, which attracted over 100,000 participants in Manila alone.

The Luneta protest united the far left, particularly the National Democrats of BAYAN and the Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM), with students, workers, flood victims, and urban poor who sought to remove Marcos and Duterte from power. The critical issue remained: ***What would be the road forward?*** What was missing was a people's alternative to the rule of the corrupt oligarchs.

The participation of significant numbers of working-class and plebeian youth made the September 21 protests a target for police harassment and repression. When they resisted, the protesters were quickly abandoned by the leaders of both the liberal bourgeois and right-wing Dutertista opposition. The lack of organized solidarity from much of the Philippine left for those victimized by police violence further demoralized the masses.

At EDSA, the Church-aligned liberal Trillion Peso March Movement (TPMM), wanted to shield Marcos from demands for his removal and to neutralize Vice President Sara Duterte and her right-wing populist supporters, who the pro-American "opposition" seeks to frame as being disloyal to the US drive to strangle China. A section of the National Democrats, specifically the Makabayan bloc in Congress led by Antonio Tinio, balanced between the Luneta protesters and the TPMM-aligned liberals, distancing themselves from any suggestion of supporting Marcos's ouster.

By mid-November, BAYAN and PLM leaders finally demanded the resignation of the Marcos/Duterte oligarchs and proposed the creation of a "National Transitional Council/People's Transitional Council" due to the pressure from the mammoth anti-corruption rally by the conservative Iglesia Ni Cristo and the heat from their own youth and urban poor base. Our tendency, recognizing the social weight and the authority of these leftist groups among the advanced sections of the proletariat, challenged BAYAN and PLM to lead a genuine struggle for a Government of the Masses.

The call for a People's Transitional Council initially inspired the most militant BAYAN and PLM supporters,

who hoped it would unite the most committed fighters and propel the struggle for power to achieve national and social liberation. While the Spartacists supported the call for a Council, we sharply opposed including liberals because these so-called "allies" are against ousting Marcos.

BAYAN and PLM leaderships shifted rightward, betraying the aspirations of their members and supporters by proposing Councils that included Church officials, the military, and "reform-minded business leaders". ***This is a betrayal!*** It was impossible to form a People's Transitional Council with these forces because they were all in Marcos's camp.

The strategy pursued by BAYAN and PLM in the anti-corruption movement mirrors past failures by tying the left and workers movement to pro-US liberals and capitalist oligarchs. This played out after the 1986 EDSA Popular Uprising, when the Marxist left supported the US-approved "Revolutionary Government" of *hacendera* [plantation owner] Corazon Aquino. The leadership of the Marxist left thus restrained the insurgent masses from pushing for power during the turbulent period that followed.

In the run up to Bonifacio Day we deployed our tiny Spartacist forces across Metro Manila to intersect leftist youth, socialists and trade union militants. Our goal was to expose the new sell-out and motivate a fight for a socialist, working-class alternative for people's liberation. We tried at every opportunity to promote a united front show of force in Luneta and communicated our opposition to the entry of the liberals and the generals in the proposed Transitional Council. The political reason behind the inability of BAYAN, PLM, and labor leaders to mobilize support for Bonifacio Day was that they offered no serious alternative to the oligarchs. They called for a Transitional Council but were paralyzed in fighting for it, because the "allies" these leaders wanted were opposed to ousting Marcos to defend their own interests. The result of hopping in the same boat with the liberals and generals was to lead the movement to a dead end, allowing President Marcos to regain his footing.

Presently, the Catholic Church hierarchy is going great lengths to influence leaders of the workers movement, including PLM and the National Democrats, through the Labor Consultative Assembly convened by the Church agency CARITAS. We also find the "socialist" leaders of PLM flirting with business circles to form an "anti-dynasty" alliance with the likes of Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) and Makati Business Club (MBC), the premier representatives of the oligarch and imperialist interests in the country, and the Advocates for National Interest representing retired senior military brass. This strategy is nothing but a rerun of the EDSA "People Power" model, which the country has experienced thrice in the past and each time led to more neocolonial slavery. Why? Because the oligarchs and their generals are pillars of social order in this country where they are the compradors, enforcers and labor contractors for the US Empire, which in turn gives military and economic aid to the corrupt government.

Today, as during 1986-1987, left and workers movement leaders continue to block the masses from acting independently against pro-US liberals, with figures like Teddy Casiño, and Luke Espiritu acting to moderate and redirect mass militancy into channels acceptable to the ruling class. This continued association between the left and the pillars of the bourgeois establishment only discredits the left in the eyes of the broad masses, who are fed up with the imperialist extortion overseen by Marcos and his liberal bloc partners.

It is urgent that the militant youth and socialist left of BAYAN and PLM take action to stop the cycle of sell-outs and defeats. What is absent today and during the EDSA Popular Uprising in February 1986 is an anti-imperialist, socialist and working-class oriented pole that seeks to mobilize the masses and other oppressed against the US-backed Marcos regime and all factions of the corrupt Philippine oligarchy.

Without revolutionary leadership, tomorrow will bring catastrophe. To build a strong opposition to Marcos and the oligarchs first requires that a sharp political fight take place inside the National Democrats and Partido Lakas ng Masa, with the aim of sweeping out the pro-liberal elements and compromisers, and rejecting, once and for all, the EDSA "People Power" strategy which falsely suggests that a coalition with bourgeois forces will resolve the burning questions of the day.

A socialist, proletarian-oriented leadership is needed to win! We call on all socialists to support the fight to build it. ***Simulan natin [Let's start].*** ■

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iclfi.org/pubs/sparttalk/2025-philippines

Water Crisis...

(Continued from page 7)

- ***Down with imperialist austerity.*** Fixing the disastrous state of public services is impossible without confronting the crippling debt, which costs R1 billion a day just to service. Repudiate the debt to the imperialist bloodsuckers!

EFF: To Fight US Imperialism, Dump Lesufi & Morero!

It's clearly impossible to carry out a struggle for these demands unless you fight to break the disastrous ties with anti-union, pro-imperialist outfits like OUTA and Rivonia Circle. ***You can't fight imperialist austerity with imperialist-funded NGOs.*** It is equally impossible unless you fight to break the reactionary ties with the ANC-led coalition governments directly responsible for the crisis. But the EFF in Gauteng has been propping up these very governments for more than a year. When JMPD cops attack water protests or SAMWU picket lines, they are under the command of an EFF MMC, Dr. Mgcini Tshwaku.

This reactionary arrangement goes directly against the interests of EFF Ground Forces. They joined the EFF in the hopes of waging a struggle ***against*** neoliberal austerity, not having their leaders help to administer the austerity. It also completely undermines the EFF's own defence against the attacks of the GNU and Trump. EFF militants are absolutely right to demand a break with these coalitions—something the EFF provincial leadership has now promised to do. This is a good first step, but it will not be of any use to the masses if it's used as a bargaining chip to get more influence in the next ANC coalition, as the leadership clearly intends. Instead of cynical electoral maneuvers, we must mobilise for a real struggle against imperialist austerity. ***Break with the butchers of Marikana! For an anti-imperialist front to defend ourselves against US imperialism and GNU attacks!*** ■

The Fallacy of the Inter-Imperialist Analysis

The following is an ICL submission to the Meeting of Internationalist Forces scheduled for May. It was first published as a 28 February Spartacist *supplement.*

Since Trump has returned to office, he has imposed tariffs on most of the world, bombed Iran, bombed Nigeria, supported the genocide in Gaza, kidnapped the president of Venezuela, threatened Mexico, Greenland and Colombia (to name only these) and is literally starving Cuba. As we write, the U.S. and Israel are bombing Iran, threatening a major war. Then there is China, focused on selling cheap EVs and solar panels.

Is this what a period of rising inter-imperialist rivalries looks like? One side on the offense while the other barely does anything in response? If China is challenging the U.S. for hegemony, why isn't it using its huge military power to seriously protect its allies? Why is it barely using its economic power against the U.S.?

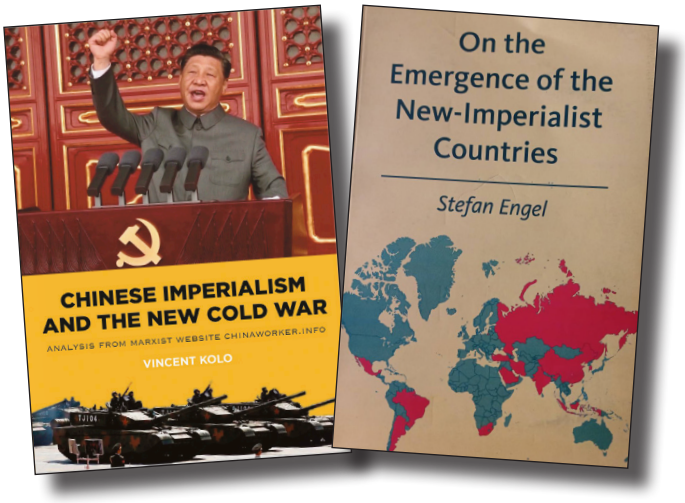
The answer is simple: ***China is not vying for world domination***, and the world situation is not defined by inter-imperialist rivalries. Rather, it remains defined by the erratic and aggressive attempts by the U.S. to maintain its global empire.

What Does Trump Want?

There has been much talk about the National Security Strategy of the Trump administration and how it supposedly proves that the U.S. is no longer world hegemon. Sure, the document states that the U.S. will no longer interfere in every inch of the globe. But it says this only so that resources can be better focused on stopping major competitors.

Trump's "Donroe" doctrine does not limit U.S. power to the Western Hemisphere. It proposes to focus on Latin America because it sees it as a weak link in China's growing reach. Meanwhile, it wants a Middle East dominated by Israel, a political realignment in Europe on the terms of the American right (not a break with the trans-Atlantic alliance!) and to maintain U.S. primacy in the Pacific. Hardly an isolationist policy.

Trump is very clear that his aggressive foreign policy is aimed at ***shoring up U.S. power*** and ***reversing U.S. decline***.


CHINESE IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW COLD WAR
ANALYSIS FROM MARXIST WEBSITE CHINAWORKER.INFO
VINCENT KOLO
On the Emergence of the New-Imperialist Countries
Stefan Engel

Pamphlets from International Socialist Alternative and German MLPD arguing that China is imperialist.

Beyond maybe parts of Africa and Eastern Ukraine, there is no area of the world where the U.S. is agreeing to pull back for other powers to take over. If the Trump foreign policy proves anything, it is that the U.S. will not let go of its global empire without a rabid fight causing untold devastation.

Peaceful Imperialism?

There is no doubt that China has huge economic interests around the world. There is also no doubt that China's foreign and economic policies are guided by the interests of Chinese capitalists and the bureaucrats of the Communist Party of China (CPC). But these factors alone do not make China an imperialist power. No empire in the history of the world existed on the basis of economic strength alone. Imperialism needs military force like fire needs air.

But China has not been at war since 1979! We are supposed to believe that China became an imperialist world power after 1992 without firing a single shot. How is this possible? Has imperialism become pacifist? Or are the Marxist theoreticians of "Chinese imperialism" maybe mistaken? To ask the question is to answer it.

If China were imperialist, surely it would use its military to defend its foreign interests, like every other imperialist power has always done. Yet it did nothing when Venezuela, China's closest partner in Latin America, to whom it has loaned 100 billion dollars, was attacked by the U.S. It also did nothing when Iran, a BRICS+ partner and a key supplier of oil, was attacked in the 12-day war. What about Pakistan? What did China do when the U.S. orchestrated the removal of President Imran Khan in favor of an American pawn? Nothing. And despite the growing number of countries defaulting on their debts, there are no signs of the Chinese military or secret services being used to collect.

Why does an "imperialist power" show such extreme reluctance to use force to defend its foreign economic interests? How do the Marxists who consider China imperialist explain this? Easy, they ignore the question.

The Case of Taiwan

It is true that in the case of Taiwan, the CPC does threaten intervention. But this has nothing to do with the classic model of colonial expansionism. Remember, Taiwan's official name remains the ***Republic of China***. This name was not imposed by Beijing; it was chosen by the founding father of modern Taiwan and butcher of the Shanghai proletariat, General Chiang Kai-shek. Taiwan exists as a separate state only because it was the last refuge of the counterrevolutionary forces of the Guomindang in 1949 and because it has been useful to the U.S. as an anti-Communist bastion.

True, most of the population in Taiwan today does not want to join the People's Republic of China (PRC)—largely because of the reactionary rule of the CPC bureaucracy. But this does not change the fact that the Taiwan-PRC conflict is an ***unfinished civil war***; it is not driven by imperialist economic interests. The proof is that nothing fundamental has changed in the CPC's policy toward Taiwan between the time when there were no capitalists at all in mainland China and now. The problem with the CPC's policy is not that it seeks reunification. It is that it does so through bureaucratic means that conciliate the capitalists and alienate the workers of Taiwan.

Where Is the Chinese Empire?

We do not say that the CPC will never use force to defend its interests—it certainly does so to suppress its population and to intimidate Filipino fisherfolk. We argue that ***there is no Chinese empire***. The PRC has no real vassals and no real zone of influence beyond its borders and a few rocks in the sea.

Moreover, the actions of the CPC bureaucracy cannot be explained through the prism of an aggressively expanding imperialist bourgeoisie. Rather, they must be understood as coming from a Stalinist bureaucracy that seeks peaceful coexistence with imperialism in order to build "socialism with Chinese characteristics." Above all else, the aim of China's economic, foreign and military policy is to make sure that never again will it be at the mercy of foreign imperialism.

Clearly, China is not acting like Germany, Japan or the U.S. in the early 20th century, as they were vying for their place in the sun. But we don't need to go that far. Just look at last year! It is absurd to argue that the U.S. and China play the same fundamental role on the world scene. Beyond an obvious analytical mistake, equating the two represents a real capitulation to the propaganda of Western and Japanese imperialism.

Russian Expansionism?

If China is reluctant to use military force, the same cannot be said of Russia. In Georgia, Syria and Ukraine, Russia has deployed its armed forces beyond its borders to defend the interests of its ruling class. This being said, Russia does not play a significant role in the syphoning off of surplus value on a global scale. Russia's important political weight in the world stems mainly from its military force and its resistance to U.S. expansionism.

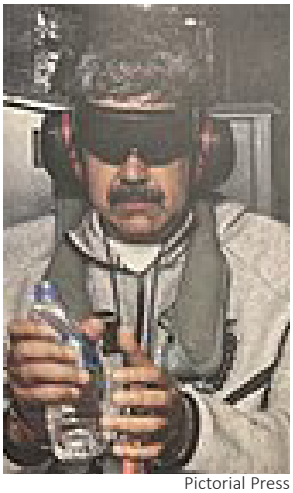
Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is the U.S. and its allies that have been expanding in Eastern Europe, bringing NATO to the very border of Russia. No one can deny this. The Ukraine conflict started because the EU and NATO attempted to push Russian influence out of Ukraine. This does not justify Russia's invasion. But it shows it is false to view the conflict simply as the result of Russian expansionism. The U.S. expanded to the East until it bit off more than it could chew. This is the fundamental cause of the Russia-Ukraine war.

However, Western propaganda about "Russian imperialism" blinds many leftists to the realities of this conflict. The Ukraine war is ***not*** a just war of national liberation. The Ukrainian armed forces are directly controlled by NATO and subordinated to Western interests. But more than that, the national dimension of the conflict has ***two sides***. Yes, if Russia wins it will mean national oppression for Ukrainians. But if Ukraine wins, it is the millions of Russians living in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine and beyond who will be nationally oppressed. Neither outcome advances the working class.

ZUMA Press

July 2025, Kiev: Buildings destroyed by devastating Russian airstrikes. Russia oppresses workers on a regional scale, USA on a global scale.

Miraflores Palace



Pictorial Press

Left: Maduro receives China's special representative for Latin America hours before being kidnapped by US special forces (right). If China is imperialist, why not use huge military to defend Chinese allies and investments?

Again, it is entirely false to place the U.S. and Russia on the same scale in terms of their role in world politics. The first has dominated the capitalist world since 1945, has hundreds of bases around the world, and continues to control all the main levers of imperialist finance capital. The second is a strong capitalist military power which has decisive weight in its immediate periphery. The first oppresses workers on a global scale, the second on a regional scale.

Fight the U.S. Empire, Unify the Workers Movement

The failure to identify the U.S. as the main support for the world imperialist order is the greatest source of disorientation and capitulation in the revolutionary movement. All the theories about inter-imperialist rivalries only serve to downplay and deny what everyone can see before their eyes: the U.S. is the main agent of chaos and misery in the world.

To recognize this does not mean becoming a vulgar campist, embracing any force that stands up to the U.S. No. We must oppose precisely the likes of Putin, Khamenei and Xi because the oppression of their own people and nationalist strategies ***undermine the fight*** against U.S. global tyranny.

The task of communists at this historic juncture is clear. ***We must build an internationalist proletarian pole against the downward spiral in which U.S. imperialism is dragging human civilization.*** Only from this strategic starting point can we begin to untangle the complex knots of regional and national conflicts and unite the working class. Only from this starting point can we forge a true, revolutionary working-class party. ■

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DEBATE

National Liberation, Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries

International Bolshevik Tendency

Socialist Party of Azania

Solidarity Action Committee Collective

Spartacist/South Africa

We print below an excerpted transcript of a public debate held at The Forge in Braamfontein, Johannesburg on 15 November 2025, between four different leftist organisations. The groups that took part had been working together in united-front actions recently, including the campaign to defend EFF militant Xolani Khoza (see page 17). The proposal for the debate came from Spartacist coming off of the discussions held with supporters of the International Bolshevik Tendency (see page 24). Motivating it, we emphasised that just as united-front defence is critical in the current situation where leftists and anti-imperialists are facing a massive onslaught, it is just as urgent to engage in serious political debate on the issues that are strategic for overcoming the left's current weakness.

In that respect, this event was a success that we hope will be built on by others. Over 50 activists and militants attended, and there was a lively and lengthy exchange on the disputed issues (the transcript below is heavily excerpted due to limited space; the full audio, around 3 hours, is available on our YouTube channel, see link below). By no means did it result in agreement on the disputed issues. But we believe it certainly helped make clear what the disagreements are, presenting the arguments for serious militants to consider. Collaboration also benefited from the exchanges, with three out of the four participating groups subsequently working together on the Open Letter and united-front class-struggle contingent at the 23 January EFF protest in defence of Julius Malema.

Chairperson

Hello comrades, friends, my name's Bobbi and I've been involved in activism almost all my life and I'm really pleased to see the turnout here.... I hereby open this debate officially. It's being live-streamed on the Facebook page of AmaBolsheviki Amnyama.... Each participant will be given 15 minutes to speak. I've got a timer here, I'm going to be very strict, but we'd also like you to be free.... Thank you comrades for coming out, all the participating organisations and everybody else for participating in this important debate.

Jesse for Spartacist/South Africa

There's a few things that I think all of the organisations that are taking part in this debate and probably most of the people in the audience would agree on. Number one, that the aspirations of the black masses for liberation were betrayed after 1994. Socially and economically, basically all of the old crap from apartheid remains unchanged. And, actually, economically the conditions of the masses are getting worse and they are now set for a severe shock with the onslaught from the GNU and Trump and US imperialism squeezing the whole country.

Number two, I think we generally agree that the central responsibility for this lies with the main leaders of the liberation movement, the ANC and especially its Tripartite Alliance partners, the leaders of the SACP and the COSATU bureaucracy who subordinated the working class to the 1994 sellout negotiated under the auspices of imperialism.

But I think there's another thing that most of us would agree on, which is that in the face of all this, the revolutionary left has been unable to offer a convincing alternative. We haven't been able to win decisive sections of the working class, but not only that, we have lost influence in the working class even as the masses have increasingly turned their backs in disgust away from the Tripartite Alliance. So I think that that is the background to consider when we look at what is happening in the face of this massive onslaught from US imperialism and the real paralysis of the working class and the left to actually resist it....

We as Spartacist believe that behind all of these problems and this reactionary development lies one main thing: The failure of the left to pursue and carry out the main task of revolutionaries, which is to compete with the nationalists for revolutionary class-struggle leadership of the liberation movement. To expose them before the masses and offer an alternative path forward. When I say the failure of the left to carry this task out, it must be said that the left as a whole has hardly even posed this as a task, or they reject it outright.

And, let me say...I absolutely include our own organisation among the left who has failed to do this. We have only recently come to the conclusion that this is actually the main task of revolutionaries, in rejecting much of our previous approach to the national question and the tasks of revolutionaries in South Africa over the course of some quite wrenching discussions and a reorientation in our international in the last few years. And so I want to make that clear, and also that's why the debate here to actually clarify these differences and clarify what exactly are the lines of dispute is very important, we think, for going forward.

So why is anti-imperialist struggle central and why is it important to fight for communist leadership of it?... It actually flows from the material conditions in society and the dynamics of class struggle that are shaped by them. Every aspect of economic and social life is stamped by the subjugation of South Africa to imperialism, above all to the US imperialists. They are the ones who call the shots on

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Listen to the full version of the debate here: youtube.com/watch?v=55xsQXqiN2Y

everything from energy policy to debt to which opposition politicians get locked up. The working class and the black majority of this country continue to be subjected to national/racial oppression and superexploitation at the hands of the white big bourgeoisie, which is deeply committed to maintaining the subjugation to US imperialism....

The main difficulty [on the left] is how to deal with this, and in particular, how do you relate that to the nationalists and the black elites that they rest on? There are two main traps which the left falls into. On the one hand, there are those on the left who point out the treacherous role played by the nationalists, and that the nationalists seek to place themselves at the head of the liberation struggle in order to subordinate the masses and subvert the struggle to advance their own narrow interests, which leads to betrayals. This is absolutely true. This is what happened with the negotiated settlement.

But the problem is that this section of the left draws the conclusion from this that it is wrong for communists to put the anti-imperialist struggle and the liberation struggle at the centre of their tasks, that to do so can only be a capitulation to the nationalists and lead to class collaboration. We have one group, the IBT, who will defend this view, I think. They say that the main task of revolutionaries is actually to separate the anti-capitalist class struggle from the national liberation struggle.

Then there's another group [on the left] that falls into the opposite trap. Which is that they look at the crucial importance of fighting imperialism and national oppression, they point out that the nationalists and the black elites are also subject to this oppression, and that it is in their interest to push back against imperialism—and the nationalists do indeed sometimes try to push back. All true enough. But from that, what they conclude is that the role of the working class and communists is to keep the nationalists on side, to turn them into a consistent anti-imperialist ally.

Now, both of these trends recognise a part of the reality, but both of them are dead wrong in their overall assessment and the political tasks that they draw from it. The fact is that the nationalists and the black elites are ***both*** oppressed by the white rulers ***and*** utterly dependent on them. And the only means that they have to push back against that oppression is to lean occasionally on the masses, which is why they pose as anti-imperialists, why they try to rally the nation behind them. But to conclude from this either that the task is to keep them consistent, or that we should reject the national liberation struggle—we think both of these are completely wrong and lead to disaster.

The task rather is to fuse the two elements together, the class struggle and the national liberation struggle, and show, in competition with the nationalists, that these tasks can only be accomplished, the struggle can only be driven forward, under working-class leadership with class-struggle methods that are fundamentally counterposed to that of the nationalists. And that the movement, as long as it stays chained under the nationalists, is going to lead to disaster. That is what we mean by competing with the nationalists for leadership of the liberation movement.

If you do not view political developments through the lens of the role of the left to fight for leadership, then you can't make any sense of the trajectory of the revolutionary left politically since Marikana. Why has nothing come of the hopes raised by NUMSA's break with the Tripartite Alliance and the foundation of SAFTU? Why was NUMSA's SRWP [Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party] a complete failure, stillborn from the start? Why have groups like WASP [Workers and Socialist Party] lost even the marginal influence that they had when they were founded in 2013? Nobody has a convincing answer to this, instead what you hear is a lot of, "this guy did it, that guy did it, this conference, that conference, these words that I suggested should have been in the programme".

And the reality is that you cannot deal with any of this in a coherent and convincing way if you ignore the elephant in the room, which is the EFF. Which is exactly the left opposition to the ANC that none of these different groups and none of the left as a whole has had any convincing answer to. The EFF's existence posed a challenge to the NUMSA leadership (and the rest of the anti-ANC left) which they couldn't answer, which is why they couldn't convince workers, including most workers in NUMSA, to vote for the SRWP. Namely, the question: Why should we join your group when there is this mass party with massive influence whose radical demands are basically the same as what all you guys say? The EFF is for expropriation of land. They are for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy. They even talk about socialism.

And in our opinion, as Spartacist, it's in fact impossible to answer this challenge from the EFF unless you start by dealing seriously with the core contradiction at the heart of that party, the reason why it has attracted so much mass support and also why it is unable to actually do anything with that and is now on the decline. Which is that on the one hand the EFF's appeal is based on a programme of demands that speak to the burning aspirations of freedom that were betrayed by the ANC. We all know what these are, the seven cardinal pillars. It's basically a new updated and more radical version of the Freedom Charter. And it is precisely because of these demands that the EFF as a party is completely unacceptable to the white monopoly capitalists who call the shots in this country. That's why the GNU was formed....

But the other part of the contradiction is that it's the EFF's petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership and strategy which are the very thing that stands as an obstacle every step of the way to actually advancing a struggle for those cardinal pillars. Because it stands as an obstacle to uniting the masses behind the working class to actually confront the white monopoly capitalists. It's not an accident that the EFF promotes parliament instead of class struggle, that this is their main focus, actually. It's because their whole nationalist strategy is based on winning the disgruntled sections of the black elites to come to them, by convincing them that the EFF is the means to advance their aspirations by getting the black masses behind them.

For revolutionaries, we think that the task that follows from this is we must work and fight at every step to sharpen this contradiction. To show both in our arguments but also in deeds that this is the case and that the EFF militants who look to that party because they see it as the means to advance a radical change, the cardinal pillars. That they need a fundamentally different strategy and leadership, one that bases everything that it does on the class struggle.

So, obviously, this is easier said than done. But the whole point is that to begin with that you first have to set this as your task, as your goal.

Instead, the main trend on the far left is to say, "Ah, the EFF, we don't want to have anything to do with them. They're a bourgeois party of the class enemy." Right? Well, first of all, it is kind of peculiar, for a party of the class enemy, that the actual ruling class—the people who call the shots, the white monopoly capitalists—want nothing whatsoever to do with it. But it's also peculiar, for a party of the class enemy, that its members come out singing songs about socialism; that at its conferences the leader of the party quotes Marx and Lenin for hours on end. Perhaps, comrades, these are hints that rigid, abstract categories are not really helpful to deal with this phenomenon. And that it's better to focus on actually dealing with the EFF as it is and how to

recognise and sharpen the contradiction that exists.

We're in a situation where the EFF has been the main opposition to the ANC for the past 12 years. Now, especially after the elections last year, it is not being challenged by the revolutionary left. It's under pressure from the right. And there are a lot of communists and Marxists who say, "Well, that's great. Better for us. Let's go forward to building a mass workers' party!" But there is no way that the effort to build a mass workers' party is going to be any different from the failed attempts like the SRWP unless it sets as its task actually fighting to compete [with the petty-bourgeois nationalists]. This is an obstacle in the way of moving the liberation struggle forward and moving the class struggle forward. Thank you.

Mandla, for the International Bolshevik Tendency

All right, comrades. *Dumelang*. The loss of support in the May 2024 election by the ANC represents the end or death of nationalism in South African politics, after 100 years of dominance from the white Afrikaner to the black petty bourgeoisie. And this left a big impasse on African national politics, especially the liberation of the oppressed masses after 30 years of ANC misrule, which has left the country in the hole. The country is without a political map going forward. A deadlock between the black masses and the ANC has been reached. In September 1909 the British king signed the South African Act into law, thus passing political authority over South Africa from British Parliament to the Parliament of the Union of South Africa, which was formed in 1910. South Africa has been under nationalist rule for 115 years, starting with the Afrikaner generals that were accommodationists to British imperialism....

The Afrikaner nationalists in 1910 to 1994, in order to achieve these objectives, used the state to develop transportation and communication infrastructure, as well as to establish a vast network of state-owned enterprises in broadcasting, armaments, power generation, development, finance, iron and steel, and chemicals. Afrikaner nationalists also facilitated the outgrowth of Afrikaner entrepreneurs, several of whom developed into international brands.

While consolidating the cohesion of Afrikaner population under their leadership, Afrikaner nationalists embarked on a massive drive to disrupt the cohesion of the black community. Their main instruments being the migrant labour system, single-sex hostels, forced removals, stripping blacks of whatever assets they had, and blocking them from acquiring new ones. The purpose of these measures was to atomise the black population so that it could not resist. All these methods exposed the black population to being exploited as cheap labour....

Per-Anders Pettersson

Johannesburg, October 2025: Pro-imperialist DA attacks BEE, blaming it for poverty, in order to push campaign to roll back gains for black people. Socialists like the IBT who parrot this are capitulating to white monopoly capital.

South Africa's black nationalists, while they were an elite, they were never an elite that owned property. This was to be a crucial factor in determining the characteristics of South Africa's democracy, especially the nature of its internal contradictions. The new black elite were therefore faced with several questions when it gained control in 1994. Should it use the newfound power to enrich itself? Should it use the new power to enrich the mass of the black people who had been exploited for the best part of 100 years? Should it do both? What about the wealth of South Africa's rich whites? The ANC allowed the white rich to keep their wealth.

Should it be nationalised? Should it be taxed? And to what extent? Those were the questions that were asked by the nationalists when they got into power in 1994. South Africa's big business anticipated all these questions and came up with its own solution. It offered a small part of their assets to the individual leaders of the black resistance movement in return for them leaving the country's business environment entirely as they found it when they took power in 1994.

The leaders found this offer of instant wealth hard to resist. The co-optation of the black nationalist elite by business came to be known as Black Economic Empowerment, or BEE. This was never a policy of the ANC during exile. This was a completely multiracial organisation, including Coloureds, blacks and whites. They never proposed BEE as a policy for enrichment. This was handed over to them by the white capitalist rulers of South Africa.

South Africa's largest companies, notwithstanding their deal with the black nationalists, realised that conflict between the black nationalists and the black masses was inevitable and would propagate even more fears than the strife between the black masses and Afrikaner nationalism. Thus, within the five years of black nationalists taking control of the state in 1994, South Africa's largest companies, like Anglo-American Corporation...as soon as the ANC came into power, they moved their assets and started to invest overseas in London....

What were the risks that came with black nationalist rule that these large corporations identified, which led them to migrate from South Africa? We saw earlier that the Afrikaner nationalists, in order to advance its interests as landowners, had to drive South Africa's industrialisation. The black nationalist petty bourgeoisie on the other hand, are not property owners. Their primary interests are not so much to drive further industrialisation, as they had nothing to gain from increasing investment. Their primary interest is to drive the black elite's private consumption.

This poses two major threats to the stability of South Africa. Private consumption would be at the expense of investment, especially of investment in South Africa's physical infrastructure. Secondly, growing elite private consumption would be in competition with the consumption of the black poor and state employees. The country ran out of electricity because despite many warnings, the state-owned power company Eskom needed to build more power plants. Governments turned a deaf ear. They did not want to make the necessary investment in power generation, or to open up power generation to independent power producers. Parastatals have become a cash cow for black nationalist elite.

Also in 2008, for several weeks, South Africa was caught up in what came to be known as xenophobic riots, which left more than 60 people dead and thousands uprooted from their homes. These were manifestations of another

decision not to invest, this time to invest in the army. South Africa thus left its borders uncontrolled to a flood into South Africa's poor neighbourhoods of economic refugees from many parts of Africa. This competition for material resources between South Africa's urban poor and arriving foreign migrants inevitably led to violent conflicts between these two groups. With the wealth of the whites protected through BEE, the only source for enrichment of the black elite available were state revenues.

This has proven to be central in the contradiction of the era of black nationalist rule. This contradiction can be summed up as follows: Who gets what share of state revenues between the elite's private consumption, the poor people's welfare consumption, investment in social and physical infrastructure, as well [as] other payments such as workers in the public sector. Competition between these streams of state revenues has become increasingly explosive. South Africa, therefore, now is entering a new phase of conflict: The conflict between the black nationalist elite and the black masses over how to distribute state revenues between them....

In the first plenary session, I strongly questioned the invitation of EFF as a capitalist party, an enemy of the working class people. We will always talk to rank-and-file members of these organisations trying to break from nationalism into the struggle of socialism and overthrowing capitalism. But there's one thing that we'll never do. We will never give them political support in the form of the vote like the Spartacists did in the last elections, 29 May 2024.

The biggest political sickness of the left is to tail nationalism until it takes them to the grave. The Spartacists that I joined, before it became AmaBolsheviki Amnyama, taught me that you support the nationalists in the fight against apartheid. Once the nationalists get into power, they turn around and shoot and kill the working people. You saw what happened in Marikana amongst the biggest examples. Nationalism is a bourgeois ideology. What alternative under these circumstances? Fight like hell to build organs of proletarian power, to rule on behalf of the oppressed, therefore creating dual power, which counterposes the dictatorship of the proletariat to the capitalist bloodsuckers that are still running this country today. In the anti-apartheid strategy of the mass democratic movement, in the 80s, masses started building area committees as an alternative to the apartheid state.

The most complete example of this phenomenon is the soviets or workers' councils of the Russian workers struggling against the Tsar, the workers led by Lenin and Trotsky. The International Bolshevik Tendency calls for the formation of such soviets as an ***alternative*** to treacherous bourgeois-nationalist parties, sworn enemies of the working class, armed with Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. That is our way forward. Thank you.

Phineas, for the Socialist Party of Azania

Amandla! I want us to just observe a moment of silence. We have lost one of our icons in the struggle, Barney Mokgatle, who was the lieutenant of the 1976 uprising, together with Tsietsi Mashinini, Khotso Seatlholo and others. He is, in fact, the last of the lieutenants of the 1976 strike. So we can just bow our heads a bit. [Moment of silence]

Thank you.

I'm not going to say anything which is different from what comrades have already talked here. The Spartacists have already said part of what I wanted to say, what I have written here, that our struggle is a unit. It cannot be differentiated into compartmentalisations.

We have got the struggle of the working class and the national struggle. But during the course of the national

Young Spartacus

Anti-apartheid protest in New York City, September 1977. Our tendency, despite at the time rejecting task of competing with nationalists for leadership of national-democratic revolution, took a militant side with black liberation struggle.

liberation struggle, they have never been separated. And if we cannot find strength in that, we will be deviating from Marxism itself. Because the Marxists believe that the national struggle is first. Each and every nation ought to liberate itself, taking the material conditions obtaining in that particular country, and then they can fight against the bourgeois class at the national level. After fighting that, then we can be able to say, now the workers of the world unite. For there is nothing to lose but chains that bind their feet and heads.

Black Consciousness from its inception has sought to merge the two. When you look at the material conditions obtaining in South Africa, mind you, we must always remember that we were not nationalised by a particular European country. We were not actually colonised by the British or colonised by the Dutch or colonised by the French. But we were colonised by a company, the Dutch East India Company. That's the one which invited the European powers to augment them and protect them. But basically the capitalists are the ones who actually colonised us. So we must always remember that. And Black Consciousness took cognizance of that.... We have got the white ruling class, which is oppressing the ruled class, which is the black working class. It discriminates against them, in the first place, it oppresses them politically, it exploits them economically. It is logical for that class which is ruled and oppressed and discriminated against to unite itself and then be able to fight against the class that is oppressing them.

So from the inception, the approach which was taken by Black Consciousness is dialectical. You can check all Marxists, all socialists in the world: the approach must be dialectical. It must be between the haves and the have-nots. As the Socialist Party, we know that the question of nationalism is not static itself. It moves with time, it moves with technology. When society changes, it changes. That is why we have got an ideology that leads us, apart from the national liberation struggle philosophy, which is scientific socialism.

Then the founders of the Black Consciousness philosophy arrived at the same conclusion which Karl Marx and other socialists arrived at. Maybe you can say the intelligent minds arrive at the same conclusion when they look at the same material conditions. So we then adopted scientific socialism as the solution against the imperialist or capitalist rule, which we call now neoliberal capitalism.

When all people were saying nationalism or national

continued on page 20

BookerBiro/X

AmaBolsheviki Amnyama

Socialist Party of Zambia

Left: Booker Omole leads discussions with inmates while in jail. Centre: Spartacist placard at 7 March protest in defence of Iran, US Consulate in Johannesburg. Right: Fred M'membe at police station following previous arrest, November 2023.

Defend Booker Omole! Defend Fred M'membe!

In recent weeks the governments of Kenya and Zambia have each targeted prominent leftists for persecution. In Kenya, the general secretary of the Communist Party Marxist–Kenya (CPM-K), Booker Ngesa Omole, was kidnapped, tortured and slapped with a range of politically-motivated, trumped-up charges. The president of the Socialist Party (SP) of Zambia, Dr. Fred M'membe, is being charged under the country's Cyber Crimes Act for "harassing" the head of state, Hakainde Hichelema, merely for critical remarks M'membe made in a podcast interview. Both cases pose not only defence of the left against vicious state repression. They are also crucial battles for fighting back against the renewed American push to shore up imperialist hegemony in Africa and pillage the continent's resources.

On 23 February, comrade Booker Omole was violently abducted by plainclothes Kenyan police. He was brutally beaten, then denied medical care for his arm and other injuries for eight days in police custody. Following an outpouring of international condemnation, he and seven others were released on 3 March against a combined bail of 1.4 million Kenyan shillings (over R180 000!). Booker and his comrades have been accused on a number of far-fetched charges, most outrageously "links" with Venezuelan "drug cartels". As the CPM-K explained, rubbishing this:

> "Linking Booker to a 'drug cartel' is pure political theatre. His only link to Venezuela is solidarity with Nicolás Maduro. Internationalism is not narcotics. Anti-imperialism is not a crime."

Booker and the CPM-K are well-known, outspoken fighters against US imperialism. They have consistently denounced the government of William Ruto for subordinating Kenya to the American empire and abetting its plunder of Africa. They played a prominent role in the 2024 youth revolt against the IMF-dictated austerity, and in the protests in 2025 against police repression. These are the true reasons behind the illegal detention of Booker and his comrades, and the wild trumped-up charges against them.

Similarly, Fred M'membe and the SP have been scathing critics of the Zambian government's miserable kowtowing to Trump, and this is why Hichelema and his cronies want to silence them—his alleged insults regarding the body of former president Lungu are just a smokescreen. Fighting against their persecution is in the direct interest of everyone in the crosshairs of the American imperialist onslaught. We will work to promote their cases among all workers, leftists and liberation fighters in South Africa, who have a special interest in building anti-imperialist unity. ***Hands off Booker Ngesa Omole and Fred M'membe! Drop all the charges!***■

We are pleased to announce that comrades representing the Partisan Defence Committee will be joining the Nuestra América Convoy to Cuba in Havana on 21 March, bringing much needed material aid to the Cuban people. ***Defend Cuba against US imperialism!*** Read more at iclfi.org/pubs/wh/2026-cuba-fundraising

iclfi.org/pubs/sparttalk/2026-cuba-aid

Hawks/DPCI: Stop Harassing Xolani Khoza!

In a brazen and arrogant provocation, Hawks/DPCI officials in Mbombela are once again harassing Xolani Khoza, threatening him with prosecution. In February, Hawks captain De Lange visited Xolani at his workplace to give him a summons demanding that he appear in court on Monday, 13 April. The bogus summons does not even give a case number, nor does it contain any charges!

To justify this blatant harassment, captain De Lange claimed that the previous charges against Xolani were only "provisionally" withdrawn. That is a lie. As everyone present can attest, the prosecution ***unconconditionally*** withdrew all charges against Xolani on 29 August 2025. They had no other choice, because in 14 months they hadn't managed to produce a shred of "evidence" to support any of the charges against him. The whole case, from start to end, was nothing but an attempt to silence an outspoken opponent of the pro-imperialist, anti-black agenda of the "GNU" coalition.

Having failed miserably, now the Hawks are desperate to resurrect the case to avoid admitting defeat. They especially want to avoid returning Xolani's belongings—his phone and passport. The Hawks took these things from Xolani when he was abducted at gunpoint in June 2024, and they refuse to return them even today, 7 months after the charges were dropped and Xolani's bail money was returned.

Enough! The Committee to Defend Xolani Khoza struggled for more than a year, alongside dozens of organisations representing socialists, liberation fighters and workers, to have the trumped up charges against Xolani thrown out of court. His persecution was a threat to all of us, and we must not let the Hawks get away with this outrage. ***Hawks/DPCI: Hands off Xolani Khoza! Return all of his belongings, now! Stop the harassment!*** ■

Lowvelder express

Thursday March 5, 2026

Xolani Khoza (wearing a black suit) with supporters outside the court during one of his appearances. > **Photo: Supplied/Xolani Khoza**

Defend Khoza Committee slams Hawks for 'vendetta' court battles

Riot Hlatshwayo

MBOMBELA - The Defend Xolani Khoza committee has criticised the Nelspruit Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, otherwise known as the Hawks, following a summons ordering Xolani Gregory Khoza to reappear in the Nelspruit Regional Court on Monday, April 13.

were withdrawn permanently, has slammed the Hawks for what it called "vendetta court battles against him."

He was arrested in June 2024 after being investigated by the Hawks and Crime Intelligence for allegedly inciting violence via social media. He reportedly called for the removal of President Cyril Ramaphosa and for the country to be shut down, citing

Dinopolo Tladi.

"To justify this blatant harassment, the Hawks claimed that the previous charges against Khoza were only 'provisionally' withdrawn. That is a lie. As the court record shows - and everyone present can attest to the fact - that the prosecution unconditionally withdrew all charges against him. They had no other choice, because in

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Partisan Defence Committee/Britain
@PDCBritain

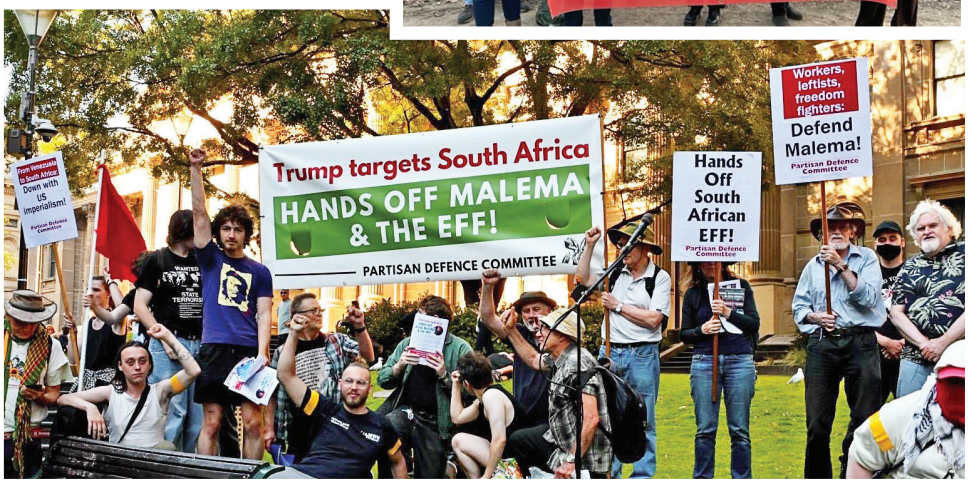
Eibhlin speaking for the Spartacist League (@WorkersHammer) at the "Hands off Julius Malema & the EFF!" protest in London this evening. She notes that British imperialism, as the former colonial power, is one of the largest investors in South Africa and has its grubby hands in everything. The fight to beat back the attack on Malema is part of building anti-imperialist resistance at home.

International protests in defence of Malema and the EFF, initiated by Spartacists, went viral on social media. Clockwise from top right: Berlin, Melbourne, London.

AmaBolsheviki Amnyama
22 January ·

German revolutionaries rallied today in the Berlin cold in defense of Julius Malema. Banner reads: "No to Trump's Blackmail! South Africa: Hands Off Julius Malema/EFF" and is signed by the Committee for Social Defence.
#HandsOffCIC
#allroadsleadtoeastlondon

EFF fordert zu Recht: Enteignung von Land ohne Entschädigung!
Nieder mit Trumps Erpressung!
Hände weg von Julius Malema und EFF!
SPARTAKIST
Nein zu Trumps Erpessung!
Südafrika: Hände weg von Julius Malema/EFF!
KfsV Komitee für soziale Verteidigung


Trump targets South Africa
HANDS OFF MALEMA & THE EFF!
PARTISAN DEFENCE COMMITTEE
Hands Off South African EFF!
Workers, leftists, freedom fighters: Defend Malema!
Partisan Defence Committee

Open Letter to Abahlali baseMjondolo, AMCU, NUMSA and SAFTU

Why *ALL* Socialists and Trade Unions Have a Stake in Defending Julius Malema

This letter was originally published on 11 December 2025, when it was sent to the organisations it's addressed to. The signatories are listed at the end of the letter, on the next page.

Dear comrades,

Your organisations, along with all working people and oppressed black masses in South Africa, are facing a massive onslaught: brutal evictions, mass retrenchments, plant closures, destruction and privatisation of basic services – the list goes on and on, and the attacks get worse every week. We clearly can't place any hopes in the capitalist rulers or their GNU lackeys to defend the South African economy against the catastrophe that Donald Trump's trade war promises to unleash. Their "answer" to Trump's tariffs is to make workers and the poor pay the consequences, exploiting the crisis to cripple the trade unions and attack the black masses. And while there have recently been a few favourable court verdicts pausing some companies' retrenchment processes, these are nothing more than a speedbump slowing the relentless attacks.

The only reliable path to resist this onslaught is through uniting workers, unemployed and landless people for collective struggle to defend all our interests against our common enemies, the imperialists and white monopoly capitalists. We must have no illusions that this will be an easy task. The socialist and trade-union movements are weaker and more divided than they have been in decades. With the weight of mass unemployment and poverty bearing down harder than ever, the feeling of helplessness is widespread. This makes it easier for the ruling class to pit the oppressed against each other, picking off one sector at a time. Your organisations can help turn this situation around by fighting to overcome the divisions and mistrust that have paralysed resistance up til now. We welcome SAFTU's declaration that your federation is "committed to breaking down divisions, overcoming the pettiness that has weakened our struggles, and forging unity of the exploited and dispossessed in action" ("SAFTU in solidarity with Abahlali baseMjondolo on the occasion of their 20th anniversary", 2 October).

We believe that a crucial part of this is building united-front defence of the left and workers movement against state repression. As the famous slogan says, "***An injury to one is an injury to all!***" We all know the important role this principle played in building the power of the black trade-union movement in the 1970s and 80s, making it the backbone of the anti-apartheid struggle. By building solidarity not on the basis of moral appeals but on our shared material interest, it was pivotal for combating the harmful effects of sectarian divisions and poisonous apartheid divide-and-rule. Think of the campaign to free Moses Mayekiso. This and countless other efforts mounted to defend trade-unionists and liberation fighters were key for unifying and fortifying the struggle.

But even though this slogan is often repeated, it has become more and more emptied of content even as the left suffers one defeat after another. The clearest example today is the deafening silence of most socialists and trade unions in response to the judicial vendetta targeting Julius Malema and the EFF. Obviously, Malema is not a worker. And we are well aware that each of your organisations has its own criticisms, political differences and in some cases past organisational conflicts with the EFF. But to take that as justification for leaving the EFF to face this attack alone is the worst sectarianism, and will only worsen the current paralysis.

We all saw what happened in May when the GNU delegation met with Trump in the Oval Office. The commander-in-chief of US imperialism effectively put a gun to Malema's head, and ordered Ramaphosa-Steenhuisen to pull the trigger. And the heads of the GNU responded by appeasing their master. What else explains the fact that years-old cases laid by AfriForum suddenly get brought to trial and rubber-stamped with "guilty" verdicts? Only dupes and apologists for the GNU will believe it's a miraculous coincidence that this happened just a few short months after Trump demanded Malema's head. And only dupes will tell workers that the critical issue in his case is whether Malema allegedly fired a rifle into the air at an EFF celebration ***seven years ago***. Even if he did it, this was a purely symbolic act that ***harmed nobody***, and it's certainly no crime from the standpoint of the working class and oppressed. The real crime is that he's threatened with a single day in prison, and possibly a 15-year sentence! The liberation movement has a long history of celebrating our heroes with gun salutes. If we allow Malema to be prosecuted for this it means bowing before the oppressor.

We urge all socialists and trade unionists to reject this ruling and fight to have it overturned. Regardless of what other issues divide us, ***all*** of our struggles will be set back if we stand aside while Trump and AfriForum take out the EFF's leadership. Every struggle for land and housing will be weakened if the

We Need UNITY to Defend Ourselves Against US Imperialism!

EFF can be targeted for being a prominent voice calling for land expropriation without compensation. Every fight against retrenchments and plant closures will be crippled if Malema can be silenced as an advocate of nationalisation of the mines and industry. For all these reasons, we urge your organisations to speak out: ***Hands off Julius Malema! Hands off the EFF!***

Some leftists object that standing up in defence of Malema would be divisive, alienating workers who mistrust the EFF or support other political parties. Nothing could be further from the truth! By standing with the EFF against this attack, you will also be building the unity and fighting strength needed to beat back the attacks on your own members. If NUMSA, FAWU and other SAFTU unions fight Trump's repression of the EFF, then workers at ArcelorMittal, Ford, Daybreak Foods and countless other companies will be in a better position to defend themselves against the effects of Trump's tariffs. It will be easier for them to rally the unemployed, community members, unorganised workers and members of other trade unions to support their struggles against retrenchments, because their unions are showing that they are serious about fighting shoulder to shoulder against our common enemy.

In fact, what's divisive is to not stand up against US imperialism. We already see how xenophobic outfits like Dudula and March and March are growing as a result of the paralysis, scapegoating immigrants as a reactionary answer to the misery caused by imperialist austerity. Fighting together with the EFF in a united front against Trump's attacks is a way to undercut the base of these reactionaries.

United-front defence of the EFF does not in any way mean giving up one's own political independence and identity. All of your organisations, as well as workers loyal to other parties or no political party at all, must be allowed and encouraged to march under the political banner they choose. Doing so gives us a stronger and more solid base for common action against our shared enemy. ***March separately, but strike together!*** That is the meaning of the united front. We appeal to you to seize this initiative for unity to defend ourselves. This will be an important step to strengthen not just your organisations but the whole working class.

Comradely,

Azanian Section of the Fourth International

Socialist Party of Azania

Committee to Defend Xolani Khoza

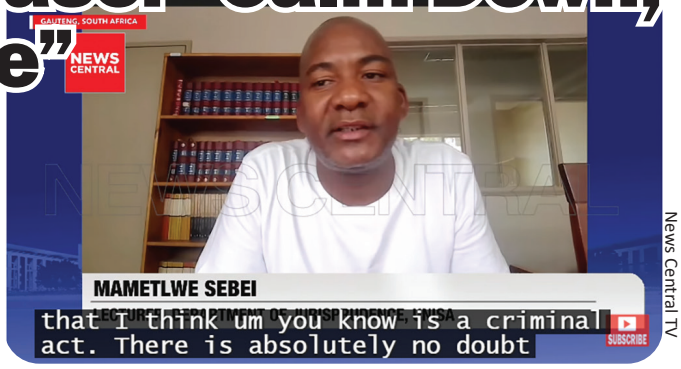
Solidarity Action Committee Collective

Spartacist/South Africa
AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA

Individual Signatories:
Paul Ntsumele, GIWUSA* member, Mbombela
Vumile Fongo, founder of Nompucuko NPO*, Queenstown
Xolani Khoza, EFF* activist and trade-unionist, Mbombela
Xolani Nkwenkwezi, NUMSA* Shop Steward, Gqeberha

*organisation listed for identification purposes only

Sebei on Malema Case: "Calm Down, Nothing to See Here"


GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA
NEWS CENTRAL
MAMETLWE SEBEI
that I think um you know is a criminal act. There is absolutely no doubt
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As the Open Letter above makes clear, defence of Malema against AfriForum and Trump is in the direct interest of all workers and socialists. This is something many rank-and-file workers clearly grasp. So why is nothing being done by the unions, especially left-wing unions like SAFTU affiliate GIWUSA, which is led by a Trotskyist, Mametlwe Sebei of WASP? An answer of sorts was given by Sebei in an interview with the Nigerian broadcaster News Central TV about Malema's case on 23 January, the first day of the pre-sentencing hearing.

In the said interview, Sebei (speaking in his capacity as lecturer of jurisprudence) acknowledges the sinister motive of AfriForum in targeting Malema and the EFF. He explains that AfriForum seeks to "decapitate" the EFF, because it is seen as an obstacle to the interests of white monopoly capital, not least because of the EFF's position on expropriation of the land without compensation and nationalisation of the mines. That much Sebei admits. But what should be done about this? In Sebei's view, there's no need to lose any sleep about it, much less mobilise the unions for a united front to ***fight*** this threat: "To the extent that there are problems in the EFF, none of that rests on this case.... the outcome itself would not have any decisive importance."

Even worse, Sebei then goes on to insinuate that Malema's conviction is somehow justified by bringing up gang violence in the Western Cape, which often results in the death of innocent bystanders in the crossfire—as if this has ***anything to do*** with Malema's alleged act of symbolically firing a rifle into the air at an EFF rally. This is utter cowardice. In the midst of an imperialist-backed AfriForum campaign to lock up Malema and behead the EFF by branding them as violent, gun-toting thugs, Sebei refuses to defend him and instead offers platitudes to soothe middle class fears about crime.

The proletariat, including the members of GIWUSA, must defend Malema to defend itself. The sentiment to defend Malema against Trump and AfriForum in the ranks of the working class must be leveraged while connecting it to defending the livelihoods of all workers and defending the country against imperialist subjugation. The key is fighting against the resistance of the trade-union bureaucrats who want to avoid this battle with Trump and the GNU. We urge comrade Sebei to join this fight, not obstruct it. ■

Debate...

(Continued from page 15)

struggle is a means to an end, we said as Black Consciousness, nationalism or national struggle is not an end on its own. An end on its own is the egalitarian society. So socialism itself is not even the end. It's a means to an end. Because socialism means nothing other than the dictatorship of the proletariat. COSATU was wrong in saying "socialism means democracy". Socialism does not mean democracy. It means dictatorship of the proletariat. And its main work is to remove the contradictions in society.

If it does not do that, it's not socialism. It's something else. That's why most of the socialist experiments in the world, like socialism in Russia, deviated from doing what it's supposed to be doing. And then it became a bureaucracy. And then it became a party-only country, which is not socialism, it's a deviation from socialism. So as the Socialist Party, we agree to an extent with the Spartacists, what they were saying. To an extent with the other comrades, which was saying here that socialism is the only way in which we can be able to solve the problem of contradictions in society.

To that effect, as socialists, we are looking at what is happening now in the country. The bourgeoisie, which is ruling, have bowed down. They agreed and admitted that they cannot rule in the same way as they were ruling before. They then are calling what they call National Dialogue, to be given direction. The dialogue which they called even before. So they are repeating themselves again. So if we, as the working class, are not actually taking that into account, that the capitalists have reached a stage in which they cannot develop human society anymore. They cannot improve the human society anymore without destruction of the means of production, the labour and other things which sustains the society. If we are not taking that into cognizance, we are going to be the spectators in the game which was supposed to be played. And then we will remain like that. It's not that society is rejecting socialists. No. We reject them, we isolate ourselves. We ostracize ourselves from the society, from the working class itself. That's why the trade union movement or the labor movement ceased in the meantime to be the schools for socialism.

They are stuck on the bread and butter issues. They can't go beyond, like in the Soviet Union during Lenin's time, where they were able to move beyond the bread and butter issues. Like in China during Mao's time, when they were able to organise themselves beyond the bread and butter issues. So the Socialist Party wants to call upon all socialists in this country. And we are many, to tell the truth. We just need to get ourselves together. And if we get ourselves together, we will be able to move the masses together with us. Black Consciousness did that for ten years. Within ten years, they moved and they led the revolution. Led the uprising. We changed and then challenged the modalities of apartheid. So if we move according to that line, which is dialectic, and sharpen the conflict, we will be able to change the situation in this country.

We launched a campaign very recently, which identified the material conditions of the very same National Dialogue, which is being moved around here. We call the National Dialogue as the National Dialogue without ideology. The strategy of the *Amakutari*. The *Amakutari* are the fallen angels. The people who were in Parliament, the people who were ruling, now formed their own smaller parties. Because they have lost that glory, and they want to recover it again. So they want to reinvent themselves. It's only us, as socialists, who can stop that trend.

We need to mount a protest against this strategy of the *Amakutari*, who are trying to reinvent themselves. And in the alternative—we discussed the strategy when we were with the community at Freedom Park—that the only solution is the sovereign National Assembly of people of this country getting together to draft a new dispensation, which will be able to be controlled by the working class themselves. So that's the only way we can move, and then be able to capture the situation as a class. The working class of this country must stop fighting for other classes, and start fighting for themselves as a class on its own. Thank you.

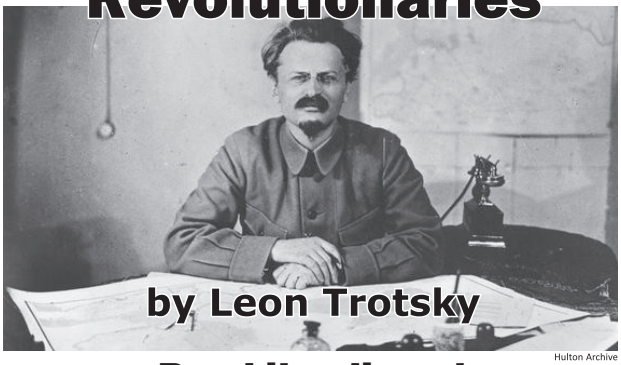
Gift, for Solidarity Action Committee Collective

In real terms, from the point of the black majority, South Africa was a slave colony. The fight against imperial control and domination gives a special national character to the struggle for emancipation. Lenin and the Third Communist International placed the national question at the centre of revolutionary struggle, particularly in the epoch of imperialism. The programme of national liberation is a programme against oppression. The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right of free political separation from the oppressor nation. It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression, and national self-determination is the fundamental democratic formula for oppressed nations.

Leon Trotsky, in his letter to South African revolutionaries, clarified that a social upheaval (in the first instance, an agrarian revolution) was unthinkable with the retention of British imperialism in the South African dominion. The struggle for the expulsion of British imperialism, its tools and agents, was an indispensable part of the programme of the South African proletarian revolution. Trotsky further argued that the South African Republic will emerge first of all as a black republic. This did not exclude either full equality for the whites, or brotherly relations between the two races, depending mainly on the conduct of the whites. This meant that the majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, would put a certain black imprint on the state. In this sense a victorious revolution would radically change not only the relation between the classes, but also between the races, and will ensure to the blacks that place in that state which corresponds to their numbers. The social revolution in South Africa will also have a national character.

The ANC and the SACP also defined the struggle against segregation and apartheid as one of "National Liberation" and argued that "The political philosophy which we profess

Letter to South African Revolutionaries



Hulton Archive

Read it online at iclfi.org/pubs/aba/1/trotsky

is that of African nationalism. This, inter alia, implies … that they (Africans) suffer an alien and foreign oppression." The struggle was to lead the Africans as the Nation to regain what they lost in the alienating process of colonisation. The struggle for National Liberation was central because of the peculiar nature of South Africa, viz. internal Colonialism, the white oppressor nation had colonised the African, Coloured and Indian oppressed nations (diluted occasionally in the official literature as national groups and nationalities). The difference between classic Colonialism and internal Colonialism was that in South Africa both the oppressor and the oppressed nations occupied the same geographical area.

Strategically they argued that the national question could only be seen as a national democratic revolution. The struggle for national liberation and political democracy was the most immediate task. To this end, all oppressed must unite and unite around their common lack of democratic rights. The countries of the world are divided into those which are mature for socialism and those which are not. Those countries not deemed to be ripe for socialism first had to struggle for their bourgeois democracy as a separate stage. The people from those countries unfortunate enough to be classified as immature or backward would in their struggle for national democracy unite all their oppressed classes (petit-bourgeoisie, peasant and workers) under the progressive bourgeoisie. In the old Menshevik tradition, the bourgeoisie is seen as the natural leadership of the democratic struggle.

And in reality, such an approach had nothing to do with Marxism as it lacked a historical materialist understanding of national developments. Economic exploitation and national oppression are part and parcel of the same social system, especially in South Africa, where capitalist development took on a racial capitalist form organised on the basis of super exploitation of cheap black labour. The struggle for National Liberation is a struggle for a formally independent country to free itself from the economic yoke of imperialism, and the resolution to this question is totally bound up with the question of the class which is brought to power. In this regard it is only the proletariat, organised as the new head of the nation that can solve the democratic question. The democratic and socialist revolution cannot be divided in time and space, and the struggle for proletarian power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, was the most immediate task (permanent and uninterrupted revolution). To this end all the oppressed has to be united under the leadership of the working class and against the bourgeoisie. It is only the seizure of power by the working class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat which could solve the question of democracy, tribalism and racism and open the road to socialism....

The class struggle in South Africa is a product of a dialectical relation between race and classes. Our struggle is an anti-racist class struggle to establish a non-racial society, a socialist society....

The two defining moments in class struggle in the post-apartheid period are the Marikana Massacre and the NUMSA Special National Congress resolutions. The Marikana Massacre revealed, like no other event before, the class character of the ANC—a party of the mining bosses in particular and the capitalist class as a whole. The Marikana Massacre accentuated the political disenfranchisement of the working class and laid bare before all the necessity for a party of the working class.

After 29 years of neoliberalism the working class is on the back foot. Deep levels of poverty and hunger, a 40% rate of unemployment (the expanded definition) and social malaise and disintegration characterise the society. The social fabric of the society is severely endangered by the breakdown of all essential services like education, health, water, electricity, sewerage, other municipal services, etc.

Furthermore, since the formation of the GNU one and a half years ago, wages, employment and services such as water has seen a deterioration in the conditions of the black working class.... The working class is in retreat.... The general level of class consciousness is low. The trade unions are weak and disorganised and divided, the civic formations have largely disappeared and most NGOs have become nothing more than feeding troughs for their leaders. The left is weak and disorganised; it is small and fragmented with limited implantation in the working class. The entire left is in crisis.

The declining voters turn-out and declining support of the ANC pointing to a serious crisis of political representation for the South African ruling class. Their political rule is based on the mandate of a minority. This is a crisis of legitimacy of the ruling classes and clearly something new has to take its place.

We note that in the last few months something is taking place in the working class. Beneath the apparently calm surface, powerful cacophonies are building up. This is a gradual accumulation of discontent and frustration in the masses, which increases as time elapses and finally boils over. Trotsky called these processes the molecular process of revolution, like molten rocks which shift slowly and imperceptibly in the depths of the society....

We are also treated very carefully by the local ANC Council as they are aware that we pose alternative power to their rule. There is no question that the deepening social and political crisis is providing the kindling of coming huge conflagrations. While all this is in the embryonic stage of development, we may quickly move from a non-revolutionary world to a pre-revolutionary one.

The task of the revolutionaries. Our task is to build the organisations and socialist consciousness of the working class through applying in our day-to-day work the method of the transitional programme, moving from today's conditions and consciousness to a socialist consciousness and condition. In accordance with this approach, our central strategic political task is to defend the working class. We do so through the building of solidarity action committees in our areas.

These are food gardens, feeding schemes, women and children oppression empowerment, land and housing, unemployed workers committees, time to learn—after school classes, political education classes, internationalism, advice offices. This is a part of the process of rebuilding the working-class movement, its integrity and preservation, self-confidence, combativity and organisation. Through the participation in active struggle and political education, a new layer of militant working-class activists will gain experience and knowledge.

We must strengthen trade unions by taking up their struggle against bureaucratism and reformism of the trade union leadership. We build the broadest possible organised unity amongst organised workers and the other sections of the working class. A good starting point is to participate actively in the SAFTU Job Losses and Factory Closures Campaign....

What we have is a crisis of leadership, the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership. The left is weak and exists in small groups and operate in silo's. We think that the tactic of a Mass Workers Party is appropriate at this conjuncture as there is a need for a working class voice in the body-politic. We must start a Campaign For a Workers Party!

The only way the working class can take power is to have a centralised working class party, a vanguard party of the class. This is not going to happen through uniting small groups of Marxists. We have a non-sectarian approach to working in the mass movement and with the political groups. The condition of this work is to promote a revolutionary working-class politics and defend this at all times in united front work.

AmaBolsheviki Amnyama

East London, 23 January protest outside pre-sentencing hearing for Julius Malema. SACC comrades helped mobilise for class-struggle contingent.

While the discussion on theory, programme and practical political work is necessary and continuous, we believe that we can only find common ground and a shared revolutionary programme and platform if we struggle together and test our views and commitment in practice. Thank you.

Contributions from the Floor

Speaker from Solidarity Action Committee Collective

I remember when the ANC was unbanned in 1990, the Workers International League of South Africa broke up and split and dissolved into the one faction that said, no, we need to join the ANC so we can transform it into a mass workers' party. And the other group, which was the minority group, stayed and said, no, the task is to build a workers' party, and they continued with that task, so isolated, because the period had changed. Imagine discussing the question of building, transforming the ANC at the very point when the betrayal was being effected in the country. I mean, that was just crazy. As crazy, I think, is the idea that we must tail behind the EFF. The programme of the EFF, let's talk about it. The programme of the EFF is a radical nationalist programme. The Freedom Charter, if you analyse it, is nothing more than a nationalist bourgeois programme. And I think Marxists have to be critically analysing the Freedom Charter rather than adapting to it. We need to train the working class in the character of the Freedom Charter....

Like Comrade Gift said, we work with all political formations, including the EFF. But I must tell you that in all our relations with them, they have proved to act in a dastardly way. Two years ago, I think, when they called for the big stay-aways, organised with us on the ground, and we all arranged to work together. And on the morning of the protest, when they realised that we had organised the many hundreds of militants to participate in the protest, they did not pitch up. In our local councils, the EFF counselors are rotten to the core....

We must work with them. But to adapt, to follow the EFF, and to think that the future liberation of the country lies with the EFF, is a mistaken view. And I wish to just advise our comrades from Spartacist regarding that. The question that we pose is that the defence of struggles, to rebuild the organisations of the working class, is the most important question right now....

Speaker from Spartacist/South Africa

Hi comrades, I'm a supporter of Spartacist.... We have a concrete proposal. It's important to debate the class nature of the EFF. But, you know, what's going on right now is that Donald Trump summoned Ramaphosa to the White House, pointed at a video of Julius Malema and said, why isn't this guy in jail yet? A few months later, Malema is found guilty of gun charges, which are clearly bogus because we know AfriForum, who brought the charges against him, is not a gun safety organisation. They are a lobby group to shut up black militants and demonise them and put them in jail.

So we think that people need to see through what these gun charges are, an imperialist-driven campaign against Julius Malema. Whatever your criticisms of the EFF are, if you do not see this as an imperialist campaign to shut up one of the key leaders of black people in South Africa for daring to speak out about nationalisations, if you don't take a stand on this, you are neutral or cowering in the face of imperialism. We want to make that really clear.

We have drafted an Open Letter to the labour movement: "We need unity to defend ourselves against US imperialism! Why it's in the interest of all socialists and trade unions to defend Julius Malema". We have copies of this at the back of our table. It's a draft letter. We'd like organisations to take it, read it, consider it, and join with us in a joint statement to the union leadership.... [see final version of Open Letter on page 18]

Speaker from the ANC

Good afternoon everyone. And let me thank you for the invite, whoever I got it from.... I'm a regional executive committee member of the African National Congress in Johannesburg. So I guess I'm the big bad monster. [laughter] I preside over 125 branches across Johannesburg. Across five organisations from COSAS up to the ANC. I develop their political education curriculums and I ensure that they are carried out. I agree with a lot that has been said about the ANC.

And I also agree that even though we could say today that the predominant contradictions in society today are more class than they are national. But the reality is that the level of consciousness of our society enjoins us to consider the approach of my comrade there. That we still do need national liberation movements in the course of advancing our class struggle.

I just have only one question. Why the EFF and not the ANC? Because both are national liberation movements. What is it that we think we are going to find in the EFF that is not in the ANC? Because if both of them are national liberation movements, then their characters are most likely the same.

That's why somebody raised the issue of [the VBS scandal]. If we are running away from corruption in the ANC, we are definitely going to find corruption in the EFF. Because both of them are national liberation movements. But without making anyone angry, I just think the EFF is just a little bit angrier version of the ANC. So I want you to help me, why you don't want to work with me and want to work with the others.

Speaker from Socialist Party of Azania

I'm a bit touched about the topic of the EFF right now. I think that's the topic that we must [be] resolute on. But I think we're unison in most cases in terms of the class line, the class struggle. I would say comrades, we must always do a class line.

Don't even try to collaborate with the bourgeois organisations. Because while we are trying to intensify the struggle, it's going to get dangerous for us. When we collaborate with the bourgeois organisations. So if the EFF has got a progressive campaign that is saying those peasants in the farmlands are being killed. So we must go stop that. Yes, we must separate with them. You know, but try to fight or attack in unison. You know, by collaborating with the

bourgeois organisations, it's about how to drive it up or how much power they have in the context of the fight as I call it.

Summary by Gift, for Solidarity Action Committee Collective

This process that is going on here, there are processes taking place all over the country. Every week, we as the Solidarity Action Committee Collective, from now to the middle of December, every weekend, we are involved in one conference or another. People are beginning to search for answers. Everybody is saying, "what is to be done?" Everybody.

There are comrades of ours that are right now participating in the CWAO [Casual Workers Advice Office] Conference, a three-day conference to discuss what is to be done. Now, I think it's all building up to a call on SAFTU and the big players, the big organisations of the working class, to call an assembly of the working class to discuss the question of what is to be done. And that's the pressure we're also putting on the leadership of SAFTU and in the struggles that we wage and wherever we go.

We're calling for the formation of a united front. We're calling for a discussion, a campaign for a mass workers' party. But we're doing it in the organisations that we are participating with while we continue to build independently on the ground in the working class.

Summary by Phineas, for Socialist Party of Azania

Amandla! Comrades, in summary of what we were discussing here, I think it's very important to agree that we have agreed. Capitalism is inherently barbaric and there is no alternative to socialism but barbarism, which is capitalism. So, there is no way in which you can modify capitalism. Capitalism will modify itself and adapt. So, we need to learn the tactics of going against it at every inch. And we have discussed here around the possible scenarios which we will be able to unite ourselves.

And I think the people who make us gather here today, they need to do it again. Because we are from organisations here. We are going to report back on what we have discussed here. And then when we come back the next time you invite us. And we will have a concrete way of how we can unite ourselves against this monster.

Summary by Mandla, for the International Bolsehevik Tendency

Thank you. Dear comrades, the first question is the independent mobilisation of the working class against all bourgeois-nationalist parties including the EFF, the ANC and any other bourgeois party. Because you support them, they get into power, they turn against you.

We know about Marikana. We know about China in 1927. We know about Indonesia in 1965. Always when the working class organisations support the nationalists, the nationalists get into power, they turn around and kill those working class supporters. It is key to mobilise the workers independently.

I have proposed in the stage that already the working class and the poor in this country have reached a deadlock. The evidence of that is the last election. Where the workers are saying, we are sick and tired of it, [it] is not taking us anywhere. So what is next is going to happen is going to be a confrontation. What we need is to mobilise the workers independently. We need the soviets. That mobilises the workers independently because most of these left organisations have been discredited by supporting the ANC or other bourgeois-nationalist organisations. We need to call for the soviets. It must be based on workers, the students, the community. And they will say what do we need to do to move forward against this capitalist government here. We need to mobilise for the dictatorship of the proletariat that is going to overthrow the system. There is no way that we can meet with them. So let's organise independently to smash these people who are running the system, killing us.

Summary by Jesse for Spartacist/South Africa

You can say "We're for soviets. We're for the dictatorship of the proletariat." So are we. Great. Let's get together and call on the workers to go out and build soviets and achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat. I don't know really if anybody seriously believes that this, at this moment, is actually going to do anything to help arm the working class, which we do actually [need to do]. The left does need to get into the working class and deal with actually defending the working class against what is coming at it right now.

Does anybody know, for example: the largest union in the country and on the continent, NUMSA…are they getting ready to go out and build soviets and take over those factories, those auto plants? The car tyre plants [that] are being shut down by the imperialists? No. Are the workers of NUMSA waiting for us to come out and tell them to come and build the soviets? You've got to be kidding me! The working class is in shock. It's US imperialism that is putting the screws to this country, just like they're putting the screws to the entire globe, and in particular the Global South, to reassert their hegemony....

But to answer the question that the ANC member raised is, I think you don't have to be a Marxist to tell. On the one hand, yes, the ANC and the EFF are cut from the same cloth. Their tradition and where they come from is a radical, petty-bourgeois nationalist tradition. Like I said, the EFF's programme of the seven cardinal pillars is an update of the Freedom Charter. But just saying that, and saying that the Freedom Charter doesn't get us to socialism, [that it] doesn't put the working class in power—just repeating these things doesn't answer any of the questions.

Because the masses of this country in the 1980s were rallied and mobilised because they wanted to fight for aspirations like the Freedom Charter. So, is your answer to that to say, ah, we don't want to deal with that because those guys are bourgeois? If you're doing that, you're actually not helping in any way to attack the authority of the bourgeois nationalists. You're actually helping to reinforce it.

And that is what one section of the radical left did in the 1980s. The workerists, right? They said, we don't want to do any United Fronts with these bourgeois organisations, people who support the ANC, they're bad, they're for capitalism. We're not going to have anything to do with them. What happened? Did they strengthen the left? No, they ceded the ground. And when the masses started to move in the mid-80s, it was all politically dominated by the ANC, including quite a number of the former workerists who went over to the ANC and the SACP.

So that's not an answer. And the other answer, too, is not to say, oh, they're great. We just need to keep them on the track. Tailing the EFF would be a very disastrous proposition. But competing for leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle to try to give it a revolutionary class-struggle basis and methods—how is that tailing the EFF? And how is that not actually dealing with the current situation? Because I'll tell you, the capitalists, the rulers, they definitely see a difference between the ANC and the EFF. They're not Marxists. But they can see that "this ANC, we can work with them". But Donald Trump didn't call to take out Malema because he heard about VBS and he's worried about the savings accounts of all those pensioners. No, he called to take him out because he says this person represents hundreds of thousands of EFF members who are saying we want the land. We want to kill

the system that keeps the white minority on top. I think we should not be indifferent to that.

Every defensive action necessarily confronts imperialism in this country. The water crisis, right? Except when you look at it, what was the last protest about water in Joburg? What programme dominated that protest? Comrades from SOPA were part of organising it. The programme that dominated that protest on November 1st was a ***pro***-imperialist programme. It was a pro-GNU, pro-austerity programme.

And most of the left was unable to actually do anything to draw a line against that. [How can you] talk about mobilising the working class independently if you do not fight to mobilise the working class against imperialism—including not just [defending] its own economic interests, but the interests of all of the masses, the unemployed, the landless? That is a total distortion of working-class political independence. It has nothing to do with Marxism and what Lenin and the Bolsheviks and Trotsky fought for and how they made the October Revolution.

So I think it would be good, rather than try to come up with some declaration or whatever, we have proposals. The comrades from SOPA have their proposal about the constituent assembly. We have our proposal, we've circulated it [see Open Letter, page 18].

[The aim of our proposal is] to actually fight. [Not delude ourselves hoping] for something that is unreal, that SAFTU is going to occupy all the factories tomorrow. (They couldn't even get the representatives [of SAFTU affiliate unions] on a Zoom call to tell us about these factories. Anybody who thinks that they are going to start occupying the factories tomorrow, that this is realistic, is actually helping build illusions in SAFTU.)

We think there should be a united front, a united defence of the working class, of workers' economic conditions. Fight against the closures. Fight against the retrenchments. But to actually make that successful and to build unity behind the working class is impossible if you do not defend the masses and the economy against imperialism. And so that's what our proposal is about, actually urging and trying to explain and pushing these organisations—including AMCU, including NUMSA—that they should actually do something to defend the EFF. And that does not mean because we think Julius Malema is God's gift to humanity.... It's because we know what is at stake. If the imperialists are able to lock him up, all of our struggles are going to be set back. So we have that proposal, and we think that these are concrete proposals which the organisations should take back and discuss. ■

Debate With IBT: Permanent Revolution in SA

In September 2025, Spartacist comrades met with representatives of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) for an extensive debate on Trotsky's programme of permanent revolution and its application in South Africa. We reprint below the presentation given by comrade Dinopolo, who was the main speaker for Spartacist at this debate. It has been lightly edited for publication. For a presentation of the IBT's views, readers are referred to the presentation by comrade Mandla at the 15 November debate (page 14 of this issue), as well as Spartacist Letters *No. 2: https://iclfi.org/pubs/spart-letters/2*

Comrades of the International Bolshevik Tendency castigate our programmatic reorientation as capitulation to bourgeois nationalism. Raising up our old programme, declaring it a respectable programmatic approximation for a revolution in South Africa, they hold it up as a paragon of permanent revolution. You insist upon sterile abstractions and formulas instead of facing up to the concrete class dynamics behind the balance of class forces in the country. Well, comrades, our tendency is very glad that we shed that revisionist programme, which in practice ceded the leadership of the liberation struggle to the black nationalists, at our re-founding conference two years ago.

You comrades prefer that programme because it allows you to remain in the sidelines, shouting platitudes about class struggle while dismissing national-democratic revolution or anti-imperialist struggle as diversion from socialism. While this disdain for competing with the nationalists for leadership of the liberation struggle allows you to retain your purity, in reality it is the nationalists who gain all the prestige, and become default leaders of this struggle. Marxists on the other hand are seen as having nothing to offer. This is something we know very well. It is not unusual to hear that Marxists have nothing to offer in regard to racial oppression in this country.

Yes, you acknowledge that the "national struggle is key to revolution in the neo-colonies", but what you leave unanswered is how will the working class lead a fight for this just cause. To the unsuspecting eye, the IBT's acknowledgement may point to the connection between the bourgeois-democratic tasks confronting the proletariat and the socialist measures it will implement in order to protect itself against bourgeois counter-revolution. This orthodox sleight of hand seeks to hide that when it comes to South Africa you erect a wall between the democratic tasks and socialist tasks by counter-posing class struggle to a fight for national liberation. In the end your acknowledgement is exposed as not only empty and hollow but a centrist cover for reactionary implications of your line, which states, for instance, "that the ***real*** struggle is ***not*** national-democratic or even anti-imperialist but anti-capitalist—a class-struggle orientation that targets not just the imperialists but their bourgeois-nationalist lackeys" (IBT presentation by Barbara Dorn, see *Spartacist Letters*).

Indeed, we know the practical consequences of this so-called class-struggle orientation. Witness for example your pro-US-imperialist declaration lambasting as "meaningless" our call to defend South Africa against Trump's trade war and the pernicious lie of white genocide peddled by the "Orange League" racists (AfriForum, Solidarity, etc.), the beneficiaries of apartheid! Furthermore, your separating bourgeois democratic tasks from socialist tasks is not only stagist but a capitulation to the bourgeoisie. Why do we need permanent revolution when the imperialist-backed Randlords and their black front men have somehow resolved the democratic tasks? Such is the implication of your method, comrades!

What is bizarre is that you brand our perspective, which advocates for a fusion of the fight for national liberation and the fight for socialist revolution, as stagist. You complain that such an approach complicates drawing of a class line—or, to quote from comrade Barbara's presentation, "makes it difficult to distinguish yourselves from the nationalists". It may seem to you that it is a capitulation to black nationalism to make the South African working class

aware that attainment of its historic objective fates it to be leader of the national liberation struggle. We, on the other hand, understand very well that social emancipation cannot happen without national liberation. The most basic thing about fighting for working-class leadership of the national liberation struggle through class-struggle methods (i.e., an independent proletarian strategy), of course, is that it allows us to expose how the nationalists hold up and betray the fight for national liberation. The thing is not to, as you imply, "out-nationalist the nationalists" but to demonstrate the limits of the petty-bourgeois nationalist tops and their methods.

As Trotsky said in his 1935 letter to his South African comrades—which comrade Barbara's presentation seems to polemicise against, I might add:

> "The Bolshevik-Leninists unmask before the native masses the inability of the Congress [meaning the ANC] to achieve the realization of even its own demands, because of its superficial, conciliatory policy."

When the ANC was selling out from the mid 80s onwards, there was no Marxist party to exploit this. The SACP was busy consolidating the ANC's hold on the black working class, and the workerists were exposed as having no answer to the national question.

Look at the EFF today. That party emerged precisely because of the ANC's betrayal—and the left, because of its disdain of the national question, has not been able to provide an answer to its growth. In fact there are two ways in which the left has responded to the EFF, which both reject fusion of national liberation struggle with class struggle. One, you get sucked into it; and two, like most of the left in this country, you stand aside and look forward to the future where the black proletariat will have dropped its illusions about national liberation, thus allowing pure class struggle to predominate.

You go on to argue that Marxists including yourselves raise democratic demands that nationalists also raise, which may lead to shifting temporary blocs with nationalists. In a word anti-imperialist united front. Yet when it comes to us this tactic mysteriously morphs into a "strategic bloc" with the bourgeoisie wherein the working class liquidates into nationalism. You can't have your cake and still eat it, comrades of the IBT. What you want is the convenience of shouting your support for the democratic demands from the sidelines. For you this is drawing a hard class line, but in reality it is surrendering leadership of the liberation struggle to the nationalists without a fight.

The ICL in a number of articles has stressed that the objective of the anti-imperialist united front is not only to take a stand against imperialism but to show in struggle how nationalism is an obstacle to liberation from imperialism. It is important to note, comrades, that in our context nationalism of the black masses arose in response to imperialist subjugation and white domination. This progressive aspect of it, if you will, expresses opposition to oppression—and any communist worth their salt is duty bound to champion this legitimate aspiration. And this includes using it as a lever to advance a revolutionary struggle against both imperialism and white domination. True enough, nationalism has reactionary quality to it—a point that in our old programme we perpetually hammered to dismiss the progressive aspirations of the black masses. For you this is a third point in a list of exhibits (which I will get to in a moment) that proves the political adaptation to bourgeois nationalism which you have charged us with.

In regard to the first exhibit, our support to the Freedom Charter, this is where your rigid separation of democratic and socialist revolution shows its ugly head. You write: "As you say, the ANC has already betrayed the Freedom Charter. Do we need to go through that again?"

It is as if the fact of the ANC betraying the Freedom Charter takes it off the agenda. Granted, some of the demands listed in the Freedom Charter are dated, particularly the demand for universal suffrage. But that radical bourgeois programme continues to animate the oppressed in this country, particularly the black masses. It has inspired the seven cardinal pillars of the EFF, and the Stalinists (both the SACP and the SRWP) continue to call for its radical implementation. This is because the colonial and apartheid structure of the economy remains intact, shown by the fact that the means of production remain concentrated in white hands. The negotiated settlement spawned neo-apartheid, where as you very well know the legal and rigid segregation was dispensed with but the economic roots of capitalism in this country—i.e., super-exploitation of black labour—remain untouched. This explains the persistence of the racial hierarchy.

The struggle to implement the Freedom Charter invokes a struggle against white monopoly capital (the imperialists and the Randlords), just as with the EFF's seven cardinal pillars today. Participation of revolutionary communists in this struggle is absolutely imperative. Not only because it gives us an opportunity to intervene in the fight with class-struggle methods and the programme of permanent revolution, thereby exposing the petty-bourgeois nationalist tops' utter incapacity to realise the implementation of their own programme. But also because it is the only way we can use their vacillations and capitulations to fight for proletarian leadership of the struggle.

To you, this is leading the working class away from the fight for socialism. You recommend instead that our task ought to be "to break any supportable concrete democratic and economic demands from the constraints of a bourgeois program or bourgeois organizations and present them as part of a transitional program for workers' power". How this will be done we are not told. Nonetheless, distorting Trotsky's *Transitional Programme* will not do. This is what he explained in that pamphlet: "It is impossible merely to reject the democratic programme; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it."

Second exhibit: for dropping our opposition to nation building, you charge us with a ludicrous claim that we want to develop national culture in South Africa. Attributing to us the New Unity Movement's position on self-determination [opposing the right of self-determination for national minorities in countries oppressed by imperialism] is nothing but a species of your imagination, I should add. Today it is common place to note that with the advent of the imperialist epoch, the nation state became reactionary. This truism however applies first of all to imperialist powers. In oppressed nations, the national liberation struggle still plays a progressive role provided it is directed against imperialism.

What does it mean to oppose nation building in South Africa? South Africa is not a nation. It is a colonially-derived state made up of diverse peoples forcibly integrated into the same political economy with whites on top and blacks at the bottom. First and foremost, nation building brings to mind the question of the colonially-drawn 1910 borders that had nothing to do with the peoples of the region and everything to do with not only economic, but geopolitical, interests of the colonial masters. Opposing nation building means accepting the squalor and imperialist-imposed underdevelopment (economic backwardness) that predominates in the former Bantustans. Perhaps most importantly, it means standing against the black masses' just aspiration to unite in struggle against their enforced division, which ultimately puts you in the same camp as the actually dominant people—the white ruling class with the imperialists standing behind them. (Today this is a position

taken by the Zulu monarch and some Khoi and San Chiefs who have allied with AfriForum to oppose expropriation of land without compensation.) The handful of black bourgeois, whom you seem to think are consolidated as a class and play an independent role, are in reality connected and subordinated to both the Randlords and the imperialists.

You argue that our fight for black liberation under the slogan of a Black-Centred Workers Government disappears other oppressed peoples, as it fails to recognise the rights of "different black minorities, such as the Zulu population in Natal, but also those of the Coloureds and Indians". Putting aside the fact that Zulu separatism has been used as a club against black unity during the struggle against apartheid, as well as the fact that Zulus constitute the largest ethnic group in the country. To say that we fail to recognise the rights of minorities is laughable, especially when you attack us for supporting the Freedom Charter and nation building. All I can say is that comrades of the IBT must read the second clause of the Charter ("All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights!"). A black-centred workers government, on the other hand, would guarantee an important role and full democratic rights for Coloureds, Indians including other Asians, and those whites who accept a government centrally based on the black working class. Super-exploitation of black labour—the bedrock upon which South African capitalism rests—still conditions the oppression and marginalisation of Coloureds and Indians. Above all, unity among the oppressed and marginalised masses is a product of anti-imperialist struggle—which you comrades refuse to dirty your hands with, given its non-proletarian character.

Third exhibit: In taking issue with exposing our old programme for dismissing the contradiction of black-nationalism, you completely miss the point about both the progressive and reactionary aspects of bourgeois nationalism, as noted above. It goes without saying that nationalism ties the oppressed black masses to the black elites and pits them against their class brothers and sisters in the imperialist centres, against other oppressed groups and all whites. You claim that for us nationalism doesn't seem to be unambiguously bourgeois, somehow expressing class contradictions. You take issue with our insistence that communists must accentuate the contradictions arising out of the balancing role that nationalists play between the black working masses and white monopoly capital.

To understand the strong hold of nationalism on the black working class you have to look at the overlap of race and class in this country. The black elites, themselves subject to and connected to white monopoly capital (and yes, they include a handful of black capitalists) exploit this hold to further subordinate the black proletariat to their leadership while at the same time fronting for the Randlords and the imperialists. This is the basis of the balancing act of nationalists and petty-bourgeois nationalist tops, which is mired in contradictions that communists must exploit in their fight for revolutionary proletarian leadership of the black masses.

You abuse Trotsky's quotation from *The Third International After Lenin* to prove that our critical support to the EFF in the previous elections was unprincipled and helped to sow illusions of the black working masses in its programme. This is false. In fact, our call to vote EFF helped promote a class line against the imperialists, explaining at the same time why the EFF cannot realise its own demands as well as the necessity for alternative strategy based on class-struggle to fight for those demands.

Here is the situation confronting a tiny Trotskyist outfit going into the momentous elections last year. There was no independent working-class representation in the elections and the level of class struggle was and remains low. The SACP had chosen not to participate independently, despite having decided to do so, in order to help the ANC which was slated to lose its majority for the first time since 1994. NUMSA's SRWP was moribund and AMCU's Labour Party barely said anything about, let alone against, imperialism. As a matter of fact, their programme was to the right of the EFF. The right-wing DA and the radical-populist EFF were contenders for an alliance with the ANC. The racist white bourgeoisie and imperialists had made it crystal clear that they would be against an EFF victory.

In the minds of workers, the choice was between more austerity in an alliance with the right-wing DA and the EFF's radical version of the Freedom Charter, the seven cardinal pillars. Objectively, the class line was between the radical demands of the EFF on the one hand and the forces that in one way or another promised to uphold or worsen the status quo. But if you equate the EFF with the Democrats, a party of US imperialism, you are going to be blind to these dynamics. The task we were confronted with in this situation was how to break the most advanced elements from black nationalism and clearly pose the need for an independent working-class party.

Revolutionary Marxist parties have employed a range of tactical agreements to deal with leftward petty-bourgeois nationalist forces, from electoral blocs to entryism. In fact, to bring back Trotsky's 1935 letter cited above, we can see that he doesn't rule out temporary alliances with these forces, writing:

> "Separate episodic agreements with the Congress, if they are forced by circumstances, are permissible only within the framework of strictly defined practical tasks, with the retention of full and complete independence of our own organization and freedom of political criticism."

The Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership in 1907 entered into a "brief formal political bloc" with the Socialist Revolutionaries. This did not stop them from mercilessly exposing the SRs as petty-bourgeois democrats who have "falsely described themselves as socialists".

To conclude, in the very text you cite, *The Third International After Lenin*, Trotsky again reminds us, in a paragraph directly above where you quote, that:

> "The sole 'condition' for every agreement with the bourgeoisie, for each separate, practical, and expedient agreement adapted to each given case, consists in not allowing either the organizations or the banners to become mixed directly or indirectly for a single day or a single hour; it consists in distinguishing between the Red and the Blue, and in not believing for an instant in the capacity or readiness of the bourgeoisie either to lead a ***genuine*** struggle against imperialism or ***not to obstruct*** the workers and peasants." ■

Editorial Note...

(Continued from page 2)

stand with the Iranian people and put them in a position to settle accounts with the mullahs on their own terms.

Does that mean we must put our hopes in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to lead the struggle against imperialism and Zionism? Absolutely not. That is the trap that another section of the left falls into. In the Global South this is definitely the more challenging obstacle to deal with, because it appeals to those with a burning hatred for imperialism but sends them to another dead end. This view is prevalent in the current war, with the IRGC putting up stiff military resistance to the overwhelming military power of the US and Israel, including blocking the Strait of Hormuz which threatens major disruption to the world economy. As communists, we certainly strive for a defeat of the current US-Israeli offensive and to drive the imperialists out of West Asia. "However", as G. Perrault writes, "it is precisely because we have a militant stance in this conflict that ***we must warn against the danger of complacency***" ("Don't Underestimate US Imperialism", page 3). In that article,

comrade Perrault warns against the danger of viewing the current war through the old lens, ignoring the fact that the US rulers are now ready to accept a much higher price to keep the world under the American boot. Electoral results, symbolic victories and short-term economic disruption are not decisive; what matters is the balance of forces among the parties, their internal coherence and their resolve to fight. Analysing the conflict through this lens, the article shows how the IRGC's strategy and policies undermine the defence of the country, and motivates how the left and anti-imperialist forces must put their own strategy forward.

* * *

Something that looms large in the Iran war—especially for anti-imperialists in South Africa and other places that have been in Trump's crosshairs and are even more vulnerable, militarily—is the utter lack of resistance from Iran's allies in BRICS+. Particularly when it comes to **China**, this does not fit with the dominant view of a rising super-power intent on supplanting the US. Why is China not using its huge military power to seriously protect its allies? Why is it barely using its economic power against the US? The answer is simple: China is ***not*** vying for world domination. While China's economic rise ***has*** been substantial and undermined US dominance, the Communist Party of China (CPC) regime plays a ***conservative*** role on the world stage, hoping beyond hope that it can continue this gradual rise ***within*** the US world system. This illusion is now colliding with US imperialism's implacable hostility.

Here again, the left divides into two main trends, both incapable of explaining this and offering a revolutionary path forward. On one side are those who see China as imperialist and see the changes in the world as signifying the intensification of inter-imperialist rivalry with the US. We debunk this in "The Fallacy of the Inter-Imperialist Analysis" (page 10). As that article explains, this position leads to confusion and capitulation in the revolutionary movement. It is particularly disarming to revolutionaries in the Global South, where the notion of Chinese "imperialism" vying with the US, despite some recent inroads, is still largely (and correctly) dismissed as out of touch with reality. On the contrary, China is widely seen as a model to emulate in seeking liberation from imperialist subjugation and national development. This is an undeniably progressive sentiment, but to unleash it revolutionaries must expose how the CPC's bureaucratic, non-revolutionary strategy, undermines the anti-imperialist struggle and China's own defence. The article, "China: Defend Venezuela, Resist America!" (page 31), is an example of this—it contrasts to the approach of the EFF, SACP and others who take China's achievements as a justification to apologise for the CPC's betrayals.

* * *

At the end of 2024, Ramaphosa and Co were still telling themselves Trump's return was no big deal and South Africa could remain insulated from the "spats among global powers". This fantasy did not last long. The country is being tossed about like a small ship on the gigantic waves of global chaos unleashed by American empire. Ramaphosa performs an elaborate tightrope walk—vacillating between "tough talk" against Trump's bullying and capitulations—which in the end only demoralises the black masses while emboldening US imperialism. But as much as the ANC and DA are loathed by ever greater sections of the black masses, the left has been incapable of tapping into this discontent and the GNU has remained relatively stable. If anything, the left and workers movement are even weaker and more fractured than before the GNU was formed.

Several articles in this issue address the different political obstacles on the left to overcoming this weakness and forging real anti-imperialist unity—despite there being a lot of ***talk*** lately about the need for such unity. One important obstacle can be seen in the refusal by much of the left and trade unions to take a stand against the persecution of Julius Malema and the EFF in the courts. This attack, dictated by Trump, threatens all leftists, workers and liberation fighters; resisting it is also in the interest of workers in the US, as comrade Erica explains in the speech on page 4. In an effort to combat the left's sectarianism and promote anti-imperialist unity in action, we initiated the Open Letter to Abahlali baseMjondolo, AMCU, NUMSA and SAFTU reprinted on page 18, which was supported by the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA) and Solidarity Action Committee Collective (SACC), as well as the Azanian Section of the Fourth International, the Committee to Defend Xolani Khoza and several individual signatories. Much more work is needed in this regard, centred on waging a struggle within the trade unions, and we look forward to collaboration with others on this (as well as continuing to expose the far leftists who act as centrist obstacles—see page 19 regarding the role of WASP leader M. Sebei).

Two of these organisations (SOPA and SACC) participated in a public debate on "The National Question, Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries" (see page 12), which was very relevant to the far left's sectarianism and current weakness. As the Spartacist speaker argued in the debate, while there are many reasons for the present weakness of the revolutionary left in SA, the central one is the failure to carry out our main task: competing with the nationalists for leadership of the national liberation struggle. This was quite controversial, with the most extreme view being that of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) speaker—who charged us with betrayal of Marxist principles for our efforts to carry out this task in relation to the EFF, which is by far the most influential left-wing opposition to the ANC (see also the presentation reprinted on page 24, from an earlier debate with the IBT). Carrying this position to its logical conclusion, the IBT later demonstrably refused to defend Malema or add its support to the Open Letter pushing for socialists and trade unions to do so.

Many on the left disparage the importance of such debate among far left groups who are all fairly small. There are many reasons why this is mistaken. First, it ignores that many of the problems facing the far left today are also the causes of the weakened and fragmented state of the whole workers movement. It is only by confronting them and clarifying the lines of division through principled debate that these weaknesses will be overcome. Second, despite our very small forces this work demonstrates in practice the possibility of struggling for unity in action while at the same time competing against the parliamentarist-nationalist strategy of the EFF.

The EFF leadership takes advantage of the far left's sectarianism in order to bolster the claim that it offers the ***only*** viable option for those who support radical demands like land expropriation without compensation and want to fight Trump and defend the EFF. In reality, despite their denunciations of Ramaphosa's capitulation to white monopoly capital and the GNU's attacks on the black masses, Malema and Co nonetheless see the ANC's foreign policy as progressive and anti-imperialist, clinging to the illusion that Ramaphosa will stand up to Trump if only the left steps in to lend him a backbone. Revolutionaries must expose this contradiction and combat these illusions. This is necessary to break through the paralysis in the face of Trump's onslaught. The articles "What *Strategy* Do We Need to Win?" (page 32) and "A Class-Struggle, Anti-Imperialist Response to the Water Crisis" (page 7) are examples of how this can be done. ■

War on Iran...

(Continued from page 3)

look further back than the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and even the bloody conflicts of the Cold War, to World War II, when the entire world was plunged into an infernal cycle of mass slaughter and destruction. This is what happens when imperialist powers are pushed into a corner. This is the prospect the future holds.

But this does not mean that we are on a straight line to World War III or that the U.S. will be ready to wage total war against Iran. There will be resistance and setbacks on this road. Rather, it means we are in a world where the general trend is toward a rising level of violence and economic chaos.

But despite all the speeches about the end of the rules-based order, many commentators still look at the war with Iran through an old lens. They underestimate the degree to which the U.S. rulers will be ready to accept economic chaos and the suffering of their own people. What would have been unacceptable a few years ago is now viewed as the necessary price to pay to keep the world under the American boot. With this new paradigm, we cannot assess the outcome of a war simply through electoral results, symbolic victories and short-term economic disruption. We must look at the balance of forces among the parties, their internal coherence and their resolve to fight.

U.S.-Israeli War Aims

Every commentator under the sun has complained that Trump has no clear objective and is constantly changing his narrative. His administration is truly incompetent. However, it is wrong to think that the U.S. and Israel do not have a clear strategic objective in this war. Long before October 7, Israel, aided by the U.S., has been clear that it seeks to ***roll back Iranian power in the region and eliminate it as a counterweight.*** The current war is simply a continuation of this campaign.

Whether in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon or now Iran, the Israelis have pursued their objective by assassinating their enemies, degrading their military capacities and grinding the entire social fabric of Israel's rivals into the ground. Unlike the Iraq and Afghan wars, for which the U.S. devoted significant resources toward establishing puppet regimes, there is no such concern in the current conflict.

Of course, Trump and Netanyahu would love to bring down the Iranian Islamic Republic and score a clear political win. But ultimately this is secondary to their objective of degrading Iran's ability to project regional power.

The Military Situation

More than two weeks into the conflict, the Iranian regime has not collapsed. It continues to have the ability to significantly disrupt the economy of the Gulf and, with the help of Hezbollah, target Israel. The blocking of the Strait of Hormuz and the targeting of oil and gas infrastructure have the potential to cause major disruptions to the world economy. Iran has been able to target certain American (and presumably Israeli) military installations, but it cannot touch the U.S. military-industrial complex or thwart its ability to bomb Iran. So far, American and Israeli forces appear to have suffered minimal casualties.

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While the Israeli and American aerial bombing campaign has not destroyed Iran's ability to strike (nor is it likely to), it has indisputably caused major economic and military damage. However, short of a full-scale ground invasion, an unlikely prospect, there is no way to fully defeat the IRGC militarily. The U.S., Israel and their Gulf allies have been able to intercept a significant proportion of the drones and missiles launched from Iran. But this ability will diminish over time as the supply of interceptor missiles decreases.

Based on this picture, it appears that ***neither side can realistically eliminate the military threat posed by the other.*** The outcome of the conflict is thus highly dependent on each side's ability and will to sustain the war.

If Iran continues to strike Israel and the Gulf when air defense missiles are depleted, disrupt oil flows to the point where they provoke a major economic crisis or inflict significant military casualties, it could potentially deal a real strategic blow that would impede future aggression.

However, if, on the contrary, it once again accepts a settlement when convenient for the U.S., we will likely see only a pause until the next round of attacks. Moreover, in such a scenario, the damage Iran will have inflicted will surely pale in comparison to the devastating long-term impact of the bombing campaign on Iranian society. As such, a lot hinges on the IRGC's ability and determination to pursue and escalate the conflict.

Will the IRGC Stay the Course?

In his first public declaration, Iran's new Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, assured everyone that "we won't forgo avenging the blood of your martyrs." The puppet president, Masoud Pezeshkian, in what looked like a coordinated declaration, stated:

> "The only way to end this war—ignited by the Zionist regime and U.S.—is recognizing Iran's legitimate rights, payment of reparations, and firm international guarantees against future aggression."

Because of these declarations as well as statements by the IRGC, many are convinced that Iran will pursue the struggle regardless of U.S. and Israeli desires to eventually settle the conflict. The argument is that given the intensity of the current attack and direct U.S. participation, Iran cannot accept stopping the conflict short of inflicting a stinging defeat on its enemies. To assess how likely the IRGC is to maintain this posture, we must look at some of the factors weighing on its determination.

First there is Iran's international position. Within the Gulf itself, Iran is trying to balance a vigorous defense with its reluctance to open a total war with its neighbors. If it sustains and expands its operations, it could find itself totally isolated in the region. This possibility is somewhat countered by Iran's two major partners, Russia and China. But far from being fully behind Iran's pursuit of an extended campaign, both will likely seek an early resolution. Russian and Chinese billionaires have deep ties to the Gulf countries, much of China's oil comes through the Strait of Hormuz, and both countries have signaled that they want a return to stability.

Of greater consequence is the internal front. While there is undoubtedly a strong sentiment of national unity in the current war, the underlying reality of Iranian society is one of sharp polarization, with growing layers of the country opposing the regime. The protests in January and the brutal repression that followed are indicative of a deep rupture.

Popular struggle against the Islamic Republic is unlikely at present, but if the war drags on and if the U.S. and Israel indicate they want out, fissures may once again occur. The IRGC knows that it does not have the same kind of popular support as it did during the Iran-Iraq war, and this no doubt will weigh on its determination to pursue the conflict.

Ultimately, the matter will be settled through bureaucratic struggles in the IRGC. The selection of Mojtaba Khamenei as new Supreme Leader points to the hardliners remaining in charge. This should not be seen as a guarantee of future intransigence. Experience shows that there are strong pressures within the regime itself toward conciliation. Despite countless provocations and betrayals by the West and promises by the hardliners to never be fooled again, the course of confrontation has always been followed by appeasement. While this does not guarantee that the same course will be followed once more, it should at the very least give pause to those who proclaim with certainty that Iran will fight until victory.

How to Throw the U.S. Out of the Middle East

Another common view is that that the U.S. may be expelled from the Middle East because of this conflict. How is this expected to happen? The basic outline can be seen in the declaration by Mojtaba Khamenei:

> "I advise the leaders of regional countries to shut down those [U.S.] bases as soon as possible, for they must surely have realized by now that the U.S.'s claims of ensuring security and peace have been nothing but lies. Shutting down U.S. bases in the region will enable those governments to strengthen their ties with their own people, who are generally dissatisfied with the humiliating behavior associated with those bases."

No doubt there is discontent in the Gulf countries at having been dragged into this war and seeing their infrastructure becoming targets. But to think that this would be enough for them to break their military ties with the U.S. is a total fantasy. U.S. military power is the very foundation on which the Gulf monarchies have maintained themselves as dystopian islands of feudal reaction.

The only way to throw the U.S. out of the Gulf is to throw the kings, sheikhs, emirs and princes out with them. This would have to be done through popular mobilization, which would have to extend to the vast layers of laboring immigrants who make these countries run. As the declaration above shows, this is not at all the perspective of the Iranian regime. It seeks to appeal to the very rulers dependent on and heavily invested in the U.S. to do the right thing and close the bases.

Even if Iran somehow exerted enough pressure for American bases to be closed, what then? Would the fanatic Sunni regimes in the Gulf accept living in harmony with a Shia republic armed with long-range ballistic missiles and the potential to acquire nuclear weapons? Never. The truth is that despite their protests, the Sunni monarchies are just as invested as Israel in breaking the Islamic Republic and removing it as a rival.

This points to the most important obstacle to throwing the U.S. out of the Middle East: the countless sectarian and national divisions that split the region. These tensions, consciously fostered by the imperialists, mean that there is always a group willing to make a pact with the devil and lean on an outside power to further its own narrow interests. As long as there isn't a way to cut through these divisions and unite the peoples of West Asia in a common struggle against the foreign oppressors, there will be no prospect of expelling imperialism from the region, which will continue to be dragged downward in an infernal cycle of wars.

An Anti-Imperialist Strategy

What does an anti-imperialist strategy look like in the current war? It must start with a clear stance in defense of Iran. ***Unity against imperialism is the precondition for any progressive outcome.***

This does not imply support for the rulers of the Islamic Republic. Starting from the standpoint of defending the country, it is necessary to show how the IRGC's strategy and policies undermine this fight.

- The religious-dictatorial character of the regime, not least its imposition of the veil and other anti-woman policies, alienates large layers of the population.
- The oppression of national minorities creates potential recruits for the imperialists and Zionists—better to give them self-determination and build a strong alliance on a fraternal basis.
- The corrupt elite undermines economic development and the ability of Iran to resist.

We must show that to repel imperialist aggression and develop the country, ***Iran needs a different regime—one based on the power of the working class and the oppressed masses.***

Given the deep sectarian divisions in Iran and in the broader region, religion cannot be the basis for unity. Neither can bureaucratically imposed secularism. ***Only by guaranteeing the religious and national rights of every minority can we start to overcome the deep animosity that exists.*** Ultimately, it is in a common struggle against foreign aggression that we will be able to bind all these various groups together.

In the broader Muslim world and Global South, we must not have any faith that the current leaders will be consistent in their opposition to the U.S. Most have a direct interest in maintaining the status quo. At every step they dither and conciliate. ***We must appeal to the masses of the Global South to oppose the subservient policies of their governments.***

AmaBolsheviki Amnyama

7 March 2026 protest at US Consulate in defence of Iran.

In Israel as well as the U.S. and other imperialist countries, the bastions of world reaction, we must fight to polarize society along class lines. No faith whatsoever can be placed in the "more democratic" wings of the ruling class. ***To win the working class of the "collective West," we must show it how the disastrous foreign policy of the elites only creates chaos and misery at home.*** The working class does not in any way have an interest in being dragged down by its rulers in a spiral of global destruction.

If we are clear that this is where humanity is heading, it should also be clear that half-measures and pious wishes that the empire will crumble from within will not do. We have no time to lose in regrouping the most consistent and determined elements of the anti-imperialist movement around a clear conception and strategy. ■

What *Strategy* to Win...

(Continued from back page)

no accident they are in Trump's crosshairs). However, it must be recognised that their struggle against imperialism is based on a ***parliamentarist-nationalist*** strategy. Their main emphasis is on the courts, parliamentary committees and commissions of enquiry. When they do seek to mobilise the masses—and they do—it is in a way that politically subordinates the working class to a middle-class leadership that channels struggle along lines acceptable to the black elites. As we discuss below, this strategy holds us back from building an effective defence against Trump and reinforces paralysis in the face of his attacks.

Against this, the task of revolutionaries is to fight to push the movement forward along ***class-struggle*** lines—ones that unite the toilers and oppressed against US imperialism, combining defence of national sovereignty with defending the masses and attacking the interests of the ruling class. Through this struggle, we must build a Bolshevik pole that competes for leadership. The main lesson from the anti-apartheid struggle is that when communists cede leadership of the national-democratic struggle to petty-bourgeois nationalists, no matter how radical, it inevitably leads to conciliation of imperialism.

To be sure, the forces of the Bolshevik pole are quite weak and disorganised today. To begin addressing this, let's look at two key questions facing the movement today and why a class-struggle strategy is needed to answer them.

Will Ramaphosa Stand Up to Trump?

Keeping up with the Ramaphosa government's response to Trump is dizzying. One week they denounce US aggression, declaring, "South Africa won't be bullied, the White House cannot dictate our domestic and foreign policies." The next they do a U-turn, offering concessions (e.g. Malema's head on a platter) in the deluded hope that Trump will ease his pressure if they give in to some of his diktats. It's an incoherent mess that only manages to piss off everyone.

To make sense of their confusing balancing act, we must start from the role that Ramaphosa and the ANC tops play in the neo-apartheid order. It's not just that they are corrupt and spineless (they are). Above all, they are representatives of the black elites, who are simultaneously crushed by the white monopoly capitalists and utterly beholden to them. The white capitalists, in turn, are a Fifth Column for US imperialism—a bit more "refined" than Trump's open fans like AfriForum, but no less committed to keeping the country under the American boot. Trump's pressure is putting the squeeze on both sections of the South African elites, making the tension between them sharper and the government's gyrations more frantic.

The EFF leaders do of course denounce the ANC's spinelessness—at times quite powerfully, like when Ramaphosa and Co crawled for Trump in the White House last May. However, if we take a step back and look at things objectively, the overall picture is a balancing act similar to the ANC's but further to the left. On the one hand, they give voice to the deep anger of the black masses who wish for a resolute stand against Trump. At the same time, the EFF's nationalist strategy is centred on trying to win the allegiance of disgruntled sections of the black elites and show them that the EFF can do a better job of defending their narrow interests. So whenever the government shifts its balance onto that foot—around the G20 summit in December, or immediately after Maduro's kidnapping—the EFF leadership falls into line behind Ramaphosa, pandering to the illusion that he will stand firm against Trump.

Since the 2024 elections, Ramaphosa and the GNU have drawn a consistent line against the EFF, a line which only gets sharper the more Trump bears down. Instead of a clear response, the EFF has answered with slogans and activity that pull in opposite directions. Radical slogans like "Year of the Pickets" and "class struggle against imperialism", which speak to Ground Forces who want a militant struggle to defend their party, have remained empty words with no serious mobilisation to back them up. In contrast, the real activity has been centred on showing up the EFF as a "responsible", purely parliamentary party and coalition-partner-in-waiting for the ANC. The end result of all these mixed signals is to confuse EFF members and reinforce the paralysis of the masses, undercutting the party's own defence and the struggle against American imperialism.

This must be fought! For EFF militants and others who want to break the paralysis, the task is to work together to forge an ***anti-imperialist front to defend ourselves against Trump and the GNU***. The only way to get Trump to back off is by making the US imperialists feel the pain. Although militarily and economically South Africa is relatively weak, we are a major supplier of platinum group metals and other critical minerals which along with rare earths constitute a key pressure point for the American empire. To maximise the impact and forge unity against US imperialism, we must fight:

- Shut down delivery of SA coal to Israel!
- No collaboration with imperialism! US bases out of Africa!
- China: Stop the supply of rare earths to the American empire! For African-Chinese economic/military cooperation based on unity against US imperialism!

Fighting for any of these things means crossing the red lines of the Randlords. That is something Ramaphosa and Co will do everything they can to stop. ***You can't fight Trump with the butchers of Marikana.***

How to Win the Workers?

The key to turning defence of Malema into a rallying point for a unified resistance to US imperialism is fusing it with the struggle to defend the masses against the enemy within—the Randlords and their GNU lackeys. Every success in defending the working class against the GNU will help strengthen and unify the forces of resistance to US aggression. And workers have a direct interest in Malema's defence: standing up to Trump will put them in a better position to defend themselves.

The working class has its back against the wall right now. Strike activity is at a low point and the trade-union movement is weak and fractured. There is a widespread feeling of helplessness in the face of the combined onslaught of Trump's tariffs and GNU neoliberal austerity. On top of fear of falling victim to the jobs bloodbath, workers are bitter and demoralised from decades of betrayal by corrupt and spineless trade-union bureaucrats who have sapped the unions' power by using them as stepping stones to personal enrichment in ANC/government and corporate posts.

What should revolutionaries do in this tough situation? Many militants look at this mess and conclude that we must build new alternatives, particularly to COSATU unions. Although motivated by a just hatred of the leaders' crimes, this means turning your back on the base of these unions—the majority of organised workers in many industries and regions—and

China: Defend Venezuela! Resist America!

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Trump's naked imperialist aggression in Venezuela is a staggering blow, not only to the masses of Latin America and the Global South but to the People's Republic of China as well. The U.S. pirates are seizing oil supplies mainly bound for China and demanding the ouster of Chinese, Russian, Cuban and Iranian advisers from Venezuela. And what is the response of the Communist Party of China (CPC)? Nothing but speeches about "international law" and pledges to maintain their economic ties, just like they did nothing to stop the Gaza genocide.

The more the CPC acts like a paper tiger, the more this encourages the depredations of the U.S. as it tries to prop up its crumbling hegemony. Toppling Maduro was a stepping stone for its plans to sink the Cuban Revolution and force Iran and other recalcitrant regimes into submission. All this is to prepare the ground for confronting the People's Republic head-on.

The empty words from the BRICS+ chastising Trump show once again their prostration before the U.S. What's needed instead is a united anti-imperialist front based on the world's workers and oppressed peoples. The Chinese people did not secure their liberation through United Nations resolutions or "win-win" negotiations but through bitter struggle against imperialism. China has the power to lead such a fight now. But its leaders resist this course because they embrace all the bankrupt institutions of the dying liberal world order. It's high time to change course!

- China used its economic muscle to push back against Trump's tariffs. Today, if it stops rare earths from reaching U.S. shores, it could force Trump to release Maduro and make him think twice before his next rampage.
- China sits on trillions in foreign reserves. It should send a good chunk to Cuba, along with engineers to help rebuild its infrastructure.
- China has built up massive military power to defend the mainland against Japanese and U.S. aggression. Good! Now use it to resist the imperialists in the Caribbean and the Persian Gulf! This would not be an "imperialist" move but a way to protect the world from the real imperialists.

There is a lot of silly talk in China that the humiliation of Maduro shows how the PLA [People's Liberation Army] could swoop into Taiwan and seize President Lai Ching-te. This bombast is just a way to save face after China's utter capitulation. In fact, the quick U.S. victory in Venezuela will strengthen U.S. encirclement of China, not least over Taiwan.

The best way to defend the People's Republic is for China to lead an anti-imperialist struggle that could win the hearts and minds of billions in the Global South and encourage workers in the U.S. and Japan to fight back against the imperialists at home. Key to this strategy is the Chinese proletariat. With its central role in global production, mobilizing this force could choke off the imperialists' profits and change the whole reactionary dynamic they're imposing on the world. ***CPC: Stop kowtowing! Fight imperialism!*** ■

斯巴达克派公

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中国：抗美援委！

leaving them to the treacherous tops. This is no way to win the confidence of the more class-conscious workers, who know in their gut that even with a rotten leadership their union is still a bulwark against the racist bosses.

Instead of abandoning the existing unions—which also worsens the organisational divisions undermining workers' power—the task is to work within them to build a consistent opposition. We must fight to defeat the union bureaucracy from within and transform the unions into revolutionary mass organisations of the proletariat. (Needless to say, this has ***nothing*** in common with reversing the split of NUMSA and other unions from the Tripartite Alliance, as is now proposed by Irvin Jim.)

The fight to rebuild the trade-union movement must be waged hand-in-hand with revitalising the liberation struggle based on class-struggle leadership. Both movements have been systematically disorganised and hollowed out by decades of subordination to nationalist elites who rammed through austerity and anti-labour attacks dictated by white monopoly capital.

The task of the day is to organise and unify the defensive struggles, exposing how the trade-union bureaucracy's reformist strategy worsens the losses and divisions. Their criminal silence on Malema's case goes hand in hand with refusal to mount any serious defence of their members against Trump and the GNU. Against this, we must fight to tie the two struggles together, showing how this is in the vital interest of the trade unions and intensifying the pressure on the unions to mobilise. ***Fight the jobs bloodbath! Nationalise without compensation foreign-owned factories, mines and farms that retrench workers!***

The EFF's radical demands like nationalisation of the mines and banks are popular among workers, and a lot of them can see that Malema's persecution is bad news. But the parliamentarist-nationalist strategy of the leadership undercuts this appeal. If the EFF leaders are just waiting for the opportunity to enter an ANC-led coalition government—which would mean betraying the EFF's Cardinal Pillars—then workers can have no confidence that they will lead a serious fight for their jobs and livelihoods. For this reason, too, building a class-struggle pole of opposition is vital for the defence of Malema and the EFF.

Just as we can't expect Trump to back off, it is hopelessly naïve to think that the persecution of Malema will fizzle out or drag on for years in the courts. The vendetta against Malema is not going away, and neither is US imperialism. We must brace ourselves for more shocks ahead.

Trade unions: Defend Malema to defend yourselves!
For class struggle against the jobs bloodbath!
For an anti-imperialist front to defend ourselves against Trump & the GNU!
Break with the butchers of Marikana! ■

AmaBolsheviki Amnyama

What Strategy Do We Need to Win?

The following article was originally published in a 23 January AmaBolsheviki Amnyama *supplement and distributed widely in East London.*

January 3rd showed the new world reality we live in. With his bombing of Venezuela and brazen abduction of Maduro and Flores, Trump sent a message loud and clear about what he intends to do with countries that refuse American diktats. Appeals to international law and the "rules-based order", friendly ties with China: none of it is any deterrent if you can't defend yourself.

This should be a wake-up call for South Africa, which has been high on Trump's hit list since his return to the Oval Office. We must have no illusions: Trump ***will*** continue to press his relentless campaign of tariffs, sanctions and other attacks on the country. As one of the weaker BRICS+ member states, South Africa is seen as a soft target. By forcing a capitulation here, the US imperialists hope to isolate and indirectly weaken China–their main strategic target. (The 2025 round of tariff wars showed that as things stand, China is still too powerful for them to confront directly.)

In the face of this unmistakable threat, we hear more and more calls from leftists for some kind of anti-imperialist front. This is an important shift, reflecting at least a basic recognition that the left and trade unions are very weak and divided, and that unity is needed to defend ourselves against US imperialism. That's a necessary starting point, but from there we must still take the first steps of ***building*** an anti-imperialist movement that wins the support of the masses and guides them in an effective struggle. Here, two main obstacles still hold back most of the left.

Above: Spartacist comrades fought for a class-struggle perspective at 23 January protests at East London Magistrate Court.

The first obstacle is clear when we look at those who refuse to defend EFF leader Julius Malema against the legal vendetta ordered by Trump. Whether out of sectarianism, workerism or subordination to the ANC, these leftists flee from the first major battle line to defend South Africa against US imperialism, weakening the working class and ceding the anti-imperialist struggle to the nationalists. [The Open Letter reprinted on page 18, is directed at combating this obstacle on the left.]

On the other hand, there are many on the left who see that whatever our political differences, we must not let them stand in the way of forming a united front to defend Malema. This is a good thing, and we seek to work together with these leftists to strengthen and broaden this united front, making it into a rallying point to fight US imperialism. But to do this we need to be honest about where we are at, including the political obstacles that also hold back this section of the left.

In terms of promoting an anti-capitulationist line, the EFF is the overwhelmingly dominant pole on the left (it's

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**Defend Malema,
Defend South Africa Against Trump!**